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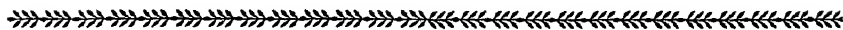




*Books by* M. M. MUSSELMAN

WHEELS IN HIS HEAD  
IT TOOK NINE TAILORS  
*with Adolphe Menjou*

# It Took Nine Tailors



*by*  
ADOLPHE MENJOU  
*and*  
M. M. MUSSELMAN

*Illustrated with Photographs*



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## IT TOOK NINE TAILORS

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## *Foreword*

**I**N Hollywood nothing less than sensational or colossal is considered worthy of recording, and legendary characters are as numerous as a press agent's adjectives. Although this fosters a quick turnover in "immortals" and a short memory for their deeds, I'm sure that my friend Adolphe Menjou, in his own unique way, will always be a headliner in the saga of Movieland.

Adolphe's nonstop career as an actor speaks for itself. He started in the business when any picture over two reels in length was considered a super-special, and he is still a leading film personality. It takes much more than a large and well-tailored wardrobe to stay on the screen for over thirty-five years.

But Adolphe is more than a good actor. He is, among other things, my favorite financial genius. Wall Street can have its Morgans, its Rockefellers, and its Bernard Baruch. I'll take Adolphe. He is very allergic to bad investments, and a falling market affects him like a falling barometer affects grandpa's rheumatiz. He's the only person I know who always buys at the bottom and sells at the top. A certain director once told me, "Menjou is expensive but worth every penny of his salary, because I not only get a good performance from him, I also find out what he's doing in the stock market."

Surprisingly enough, Adolphe is also a Hollywood intellectual. In fact, he is my favorite actor-intellectual. I have heard him discuss economics, history, political science, art, literature, drama, and many other erudite subjects. Of course, there is a plethora of intellectuals in Hollywood and they will discuss any subject under the sun, but none of them is as fluent and entertaining as Adolphe. It takes quite a guy to discourse on Balkan politics of 1912 and make you like it. Adolphe will not only make you like it,

he will also teach you how to say "hello" in Serbian, Rumanian, and Greek.

And he is certainly my favorite raconteur. Turn him loose in a roomful of Hollywood's loudest and most determined extroverts and in five minutes Adolphe will monopolize the spotlight and get more belly laughs than Donald Duck at a Saturday matinee.

Then, of course, he is my favorite fashion critic. He can tear a lapel apart with the most scathing and contemptuous adjectives I have ever heard. And he can pass a critical eye over your pants in a manner that makes you feel that you have come to dinner wearing baggy overalls.

Lastly, he is far and away my favorite actor-golfer. If he plays a good game, he radiates enthusiasm like the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and makes you forget that he is taking your money. If he plays a bad game, his moans echo from the hills of Bel-Air Country Club like the cries of a man in mortal agony. Either way it is an enchanting experience.

When you inquire from most golfers how they played, you must be prepared for dull recapitulations of their misfortunes or triumphs and you soon wish you had never mentioned the subject. With Adolphe it is different. If he has won, his résumé of the victory is always a dramatic achievement. If he has lost, his anguish and accusations of "robbery" are designed only to amuse you.

One day I was starting down the first fairway at Bel-Air Country Club and my path crossed Menjou's as he was coming up the eighteenth. He was playing with a foursome consisting of Bob Montgomery, Frank Morgan, and George Murphy. Adolphe looked exceedingly grim and disconsolate.

"How are you doing?" I inquired.

"I'm being murdered!" he shouted indignantly. "A golf course is just a poolroom out of doors. I've been caught by a pack of rascals—a gang of golf-links sharpies. But it'll be a good lesson to me." He nodded sagely and continued, "I've observed these slickers very closely and I intend to remember their faces for the rest of my life. Never again will they trap me into a golf game."

"How do you stand?" I asked, thinking that he must already have lost his shirt.

"All even," he declared. "Everything depends on this hole."

I've always thought that somebody should write a book about Adolphe. And now that he has done it himself, I find that he is my favorite Hollywood autobiographer.

CLARK GABLE



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## 1: *Silk Hat and Tails*

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 RANGES were still the most important product of Hollywood; you could still see a movie for a nickel; Cecil B. De Mille had just made his first hit, *The Squaw Man*, starring Dustin Farnum; Francis X. Bushman, "The Most Handsome Man in the World," was every girl's ideal; Mary Pickford had been crowned America's Sweetheart; and neither Van Johnson nor Betty Grable had been born yet.

It was the winter of 1913 and I was working in my father's restaurant, the Maison Menjou, at Broadway and Ninety-first Street in New York City. I was a little of everything from cashier to captain, and Father foresaw a great future for me as a restaurateur. He knew that I yearned to be an actor, but he thought I would outgrow this youthful foolishness. It was something we seldom spoke of, like a skeleton in the closet, for Father didn't think much of actors. Of all the unpaid meal checks he had collected in a lifetime of operating restaurants those signed by actors and musicians were by far the greatest in number. Musicians he forgave; they were artists. But actors were only dead beats; he wanted no actors in the family.

One of the regular patrons at the Maison Menjou was a fellow named Robinson. He was a theatrical scene painter; but when he had gone to work for the Vitagraph Studios in Brooklyn, he had been given the newly conceived title of Art Director. This was probably the first serious effort on the part of movie moguls to connect motion pictures with art.

When I learned that Robinson was in show business, I quickly got better acquainted with him. One evening when he was finish-

ing his coffee and Father was well out of earshot, I told him about my college theatrical experience, confessed that I wanted to be an actor, and asked him if he could help me find a job on the stage.

He was not very encouraging. Acting, in his opinion, was a poor way to make a steady living; the restaurant business was safer and more profitable. But if I really wanted to be an actor, he suggested that I go out to Vitagraph Studios and try to land a job as an extra in moving pictures.

"I know nothing about moving pictures," I told him.

"All the better," he responded. "That qualifies you for an executive position."

I realized that Robinson must be something of a cynic about the art of the cinema but refused to let him cool my desire to enter the acting profession.

"Who do I see about getting a job?" I inquired.

"The casting director is Arthur Cozzine. I'll mention your name to him."

Today the average casting director interviews neophyte job hunters only when trapped into it. He hasn't time to see them all, so he tries to see as few as possible. The major studios all have scouts to search for new talent; but when a talent scout appears with a young prospect in tow, the casting director is apt to view the new "find" with a jaundiced eye. He has become cynical about the ability of these prospective Gables and Bergmans; they appear and disappear each year by the hundreds. Even when some young Thespian has just received accolades from the Broadway critics, he had better arrive at the studio accompanied by an important agent and armed with a letter of introduction from the president of the company or he may never get past the front gate.

But I was lucky. I got into the business when casting directors interviewed anybody who claimed to be an actor. I was also lucky because my job at the restaurant didn't interfere with my becoming an actor on the side. The business at the Maison Menjou was

all from five in the evening till midnight, so my days were practically my own.

Early the next morning I trimmed and waxed my mustache, put on my best suit, and sneaked out without telling Father or Mother where I was going. Then I caught a subway to Brooklyn, changed to an el, and finally landed at Avenue M about a mile or two from Coney Island.

The studio was only a short walk from the el station. It consisted of a group of heterogeneous buildings covering about half a block. There was a parking space in front of the main entrance that was occupied by several expensive foreign motorcars—a Panhard, a Fiat, a Renault, and a couple of others.

I assumed, mistakenly, that these cars must belong to the leading actors who worked there—such stars as Earl Williams, Maurice Costello, Norma Talmadge, Anita Stewart, and John Bunny. But that was not the case. The cars belonged to the principal owners of Vitagraph, of whom the most prominent was J. Stuart Blackton, a motorcar and motorboat enthusiast.

At that time Vitagraph was the most active company in the business, and Commodore Blackton and his associates were turning celluloid into gold so fast that the United States Mint was working overtime to keep even with them.

I hesitated outside the door in the midst of all this four-wheeled luxury to adjust the angle of my hat and to give my mustache a fresh twist, then made an impressive entrance. But my histrionics were wasted, for I found myself in an empty hall from which a flight of steps ascended to the second floor. I mounted the steps and came upon a disinterested young lady behind a reception desk. She took my name and told me to wait.

I now expected to be ushered into the presence of Mr. Cozzine and was relaxing until the big moment arrived, when, to my embarrassment, that gentleman came quietly out of his office and discovered me pensively biting a broken thumbnail.

Instead of appearing poised and sophisticated, as I presumed an actor should, I must have looked like just what I was—a nervous

young man in search of a job. But Cozzine was used to actors looking nervous, for in those days real actors seldom looked for a movie job until they were two weeks behind in their rent.

"You'll do—good type," Cozzine said after a quick glance. "Go down and wait in the yard. I'll send Wally Van down to take a look at you. He's starting a new picture tomorrow."

"The yard" was a large open space hemmed in by the various studio buildings—offices, projection rooms, property and wardrobe buildings, and the stages. At some time or other grass had probably grown there, but it had long since been trodden to death by the feet of hundreds of extra players waiting to be chosen for a day's work.

Once a person was admitted to the yard he was a recognized actor and might be selected to play a part. When I arrived, there were already forty or fifty actors waiting there, lounging in groups or reading morning newspapers. Some of them were real stage actors out of jobs, but most of them were Brooklyn youngsters with ambitions to be movie stars. Already the motion-picture studios had become lodestones attracting youth and beauty, but at that time their pull was mostly local. Vitagraph's ingénues and juveniles of those days were, for the most part, recent graduates of the various Brooklyn high schools.

I didn't know a soul. I was neither an actor nor an alumnus of a local high-school class play. I was just a young man with a mustache and a yen to be another Richard Mansfield.

Pretty soon Wally Van appeared. He was a dynamic little man who not only directed but also played leads in his own pictures. Originally he had been an expert mechanic in charge of all of Commodore Blackton's automobiles and racing motor boats, but he had graduated to the role of movie maker.

"Any experience?" he inquired.

"I've done a lot of stage work," I lied glibly.

"There's the part of a circus ringmaster in this new picture," he said. "Know anything about circuses?"

I assured him that I knew all about circuses; that I was, in fact,

personally acquainted with many circus people, including a couple of ringmasters—which was true, for I had met numerous circus performers at the restaurants my father had owned in Cleveland, Ohio.

“The studio will furnish you with riding boots and white riding breeches,” Wally informed me, “but you will have to supply your own dress coat and silk hat. Do you have any wardrobe?”

“Everything,” I asserted, with an all-inclusive gesture.

Wally then ordered me to report the next morning no later than eight-thirty for a picture entitled *The Man behind the Door*. The camera would start turning promptly at nine. I left the studio with a piece of paper clutched in my hand attesting to the fact that I was an actor at a salary of five dollars a day. It seemed to me like a tremendous stipend—more than I earned in my father’s restaurant. But there was one catch: I had no dress coat or silk hat.

So as soon as I got back to Manhattan I began canvassing my friends for these articles that were to make me an actor. I had no trouble borrowing a dress coat from our landlord’s son, but the silk hat was more of a problem. Nobody seemed to own one that fitted me. I began to get panicky, for my career as an actor hung on the procurement of a hat. I even considered buying one, but that was only wishful thinking, for I didn’t have enough money.

A few years later I was to own more silk hats than one man could use in a lifetime, but on that day I couldn’t even borrow one. Finally someone suggested that I might rent a hat. Somehow that simple solution had never occurred to me.

Relieved to think that I would not have to give up that five dollars a day for lack of a silk hat, I hurried down to Seventh Avenue and found one of those places that rent complete wardrobes for formal occasions. The proprietor led me to an array of scrofulous silk hats and announced that their rental price was from fifty cents to a dollar a day.

“Why is there a difference?” I inquired.

“This one for a dollar formerly belonged to John L. Sullivan.

Think what a privilege to wear the hat that once graced the brow of John L. Sullivan!"

But John L. Sullivan's hat was too large for me, so the fellow brought out a hat that he assured me had been worn by Nat Goodwin at his first wedding. Only eighty-five cents.

"You can't go wrong in a hat like that," he told me.

"Nat Goodwin did," I reminded him, but the proprietor was not amused.

For sixty-five cents I could have worn a hat that had once belonged to J. Pierpont Morgan, but I finally rented a hat for fifty cents that had never been worn by anybody more important than the best man at a Polish wedding.

That night I confessed to Father that I had taken an outside job as an actor at five dollars a day. He didn't rebuke me, for no Frenchman has anything but the utmost respect for five American dollars; but the expression that crossed his face was as full of disapproval as though I had announced that I was going to play the piano in a bawdyhouse.

Despite the fact that we didn't close the restaurant until after midnight, I was up the next morning at six. I had breakfast in the kitchen, wrapped the dress coat and silk hat in brown paper, took the long ride to Avenue M, and arrived at the studio an hour ahead of shooting time. At the wardrobe department I was handed the other parts of my costume, after which I found my way to the men's dressing room. This was a long, narrow room in which all the actors except the stars dressed. There were some hooks on the wall to hang clothes on and also a long dressing table with mirrors at which several actors were already putting on make-up, for in those days everybody applied his own grease paint and false whiskers. In fact, a man who was clever at make-up was assured of steady work because of the variety of parts he could play.

I watched, fascinated, as one fellow combed out crepe hair and pasted a realistic spade beard on his chin. Another was adding long sideburns to his cheeks. Still another was fitting a wig on

his head. Their skill with the grease paint and crepe hair gave me a feeling of inferiority. I knew that I was outclassed. These fellows were artistes. I was just a novice.

After watching them for a while I finally borrowed some grease paint and gave myself a make-up as nearly like theirs as I could. Then I began to get into my costume. To my horror both the riding breeches and the boots were several sizes too large for me. I tried to alter the waist size of the breeches by folding a large tuck in the back and pulling my belt tight. But this left a bustlelike bulge beneath my tail coat. I looked at my posterior extension in the mirror and gave a cry of anguish. My distress only amused the other actors; they were used to misfits from the wardrobe department and looked on such flaws in attire as merely one of the occupational hazards of motion pictures.

"Don't worry," somebody said. "If you keep your face to the camera, nobody will see the seat of your pants."

But I was mighty worried. The thought of making my debut before the camera in baggy riding breeches left me stricken. I had rich friends who owned their own riding breeches. If they ever saw me on the screen in those misbegotten bloomers, I knew I'd never hear the end of it. And I wouldn't dare take my girl to the movies to see me acting in balloon-bottom breeches! But the one I worried about most was Father. I knew that if he ever saw me performing in those outsize pantaloons he would be still more scornful of motion pictures. For Father was a stickler when it came to clothes.

But before I could do anything about my breeches it was almost nine o'clock and the dressing room was emptying fast, so I dashed for the stage where our troupe was gathering.

There I saw the other actors made up as acrobats, chariot racers, equestrians, lion tamers—and all in form-fitting costumes. But I, the ringmaster, had baggy riding breeches! I felt as conspicuous as though I had none at all. I was sure Wally Van would take one look at me and call for another ringmaster, one large enough to fill the studio's riding breeches. But he didn't. After



a quick glance at my costume, he gave a nod of approval, handed me a buggy whip, and we started shooting.

In those days many of the motion-picture stages were simply large open platforms on the roofs of New York office or loft buildings. When the sun was too bright, strips of muslin were stretched overhead as filters. If the sky happened to be cloudy, the film shot for that day might turn out slightly underexposed, but nobody worried much about that. When a strong wind was blowing, the muslin strips would flutter and snap and sometimes would be torn from their moorings. The perishable nature of those open stages, along with the helter-skelter manner in which pictures were shot, made acting in them seem like a game of charades.

But the Vitagraph studio was one of the most modern in the industry, with specially constructed barnlike stages lighted by banks of Cooper-Hewitts. We shot *The Man behind the Door* on one of these stages, sharing it with three other companies. Tragedy, comedy, and farce were all brewed in the same pot, seasoned with a deafening mixture of cacophony and confusion.

On one side of us Ralph Ince, a brother of the famous Tom Ince, was shooting a western saloon scene, full of pistol shots. On the other side a couple of comics were taking prat falls for Director George Baker. And on the next set Captain Harry Lambert was directing a cabaret scene with a five-piece orchestra. All the while carpenters were hammering and sawing on a new set that was being erected. Above the racket of saws, shots, saxophones, and slapstick the voices of all four directors could be heard bellying instructions to the actors. The cameras also added to the din, since they perforated the sprocket holes in the film as they shot, spewing a constant stream of celluloid confetti on the floor. It was bedlam.

Movie acting was amazingly simple. There were no lines to learn and few if any rehearsals. Wally would give us the general idea of a scene, our entrances and positions, and then we would start to shoot. We made up our own dialogue, and sometimes it had little or nothing to do with the sense of the scene.

At that time the actors were always required to stay behind a line 9 feet from the camera. To have advanced any closer would have cut the actors' feet out of the picture. For some reason directors believed that it was inartistic to show an actor without feet.

Since I was playing the role of a ringmaster, I naturally expected to do a little ringmastering in the picture. But I never did. All I had to do was skulk behind phony tent flaps, twirl my mustache, and plot some sort of devilment with the lion tamer. But I was never without my whip; it was with me in every scene. That gave the impression, I presume, that I was about to step into the big top and do my stuff.

While the picture was in production I never did learn the plot. Wally Van had the only script. He kept it in his hip pocket and seldom referred to it. Not until I saw the finished picture on the screen did I discover, to my surprise, that *The Man behind the Door* was a college comedy! The circus played a rather incidental part in the plot, and I was a very unimportant heavy. The only scenes that showed a ringmaster at work were shots of a real circus that had been taken in France. I had been hired for the job because the French ringmaster I was doubling for had a mustache and baggy riding breeches!

After three days my part in *The Man behind the Door* was finished, and I had earned fifteen dollars. I took the silk hat back to the place on Second Avenue and tried to settle with its owner for one dollar.

"Just think," I told the proprietor, "some day you can say this hat was worn by Adolphe Menjou, the famous movie actor, and charge a big price for it."

"Phuil!" said he. "I should live so long!"

Not wishing to start an argument with a critic, I handed the man his dollar and a half, crossed nonchalantly to the door (up center), cast a tolerant smile over my shoulder, and made a dignified exit.

## 2: *Mon Père et Ma Mère*

---

**W**HY I ever aspired to the theater or imagined that I possessed any talent as an actor I'll never understand. All my forebears had been honest men of toil; they had raised sheep, grown grapes, or tilled the soil. Not one of them had ever thought of entering such an opprobrious occupation as acting.

Of course John Barrymore used to have an explanation for my love of the theater. "You bear a remarkable resemblance to my late uncle, John Drew," he once told me, then added, with a Rabelaisian gleam in his eyes, "Did your mother, by any chance, ever pass through Philadelphia, my uncle's home town?"

I never repeated his remark to my mother; I was afraid she might not appreciate the Barrymore type of humor.

Mother was born in the village of Letterfrach in the picturesque Connemara district of County Galway, Ireland. For many years she thought a theater was just a way station on the road to perdition. Her maiden name was Nora Joyce and she was a distant cousin of James Joyce, the Irish novelist. But after struggling through the first hundred pages of *Ulysses*, she disclaimed the relationship.

My father, Jean Adolphe Menjou, was born in a little French village called Commune D'Arbus, located between Pau and Lourdes. He never saw the inside of a theater until he was almost old enough to vote.

My paternal grandparents came to the United States when Father was eleven or twelve years old. When he was about fifteen he got a job at the old Gilsey House in New York and learned the hotel and restaurant business from the kitchen to the

lobby. Later he worked at Delmonico's and at the Hoffman House. Sometime during his long career as a restaurateur he formed a partnership with another man whose name was also Adolphe. They tossed a coin to see which one would change his name. Father lost, so after that he called himself "Albert."

About 1886 he became the lessee-manager of the Hotel Richelieu in Chicago and later went to Pittsburgh to manage the Hotel Duquesne. Working in the hotel were four sisters, recently arrived from Ireland, with charming Irish brogues that father found difficult to understand. The one who gave him the most trouble was Nora, the youngest. He couldn't understand half of what she said, and she was just as confused by his French accent. But they both believed that their own pronunciations were as pure and undefiled as Webster's unabridged. The Frenchman would find excuses to talk to the quaint *jeune fille* from Ireland just to be able to hear the amusing things she did to the English language. And the Irish colleen often went out of her way just to hear the funny Frenchman say *zees* and *zat* for *this* and *that*. When they finished one of their complicated conversations, Albert would go about his duties smiling to himself and shaking his head, while Nora would rush off to her three sisters and repeat his amusing words, whereupon they would all shriek with laughter.

But it soon occurred to Father that he was falling in love. Like any Frenchman he had been in love a number of times, but this was much more painful than anything he had ever experienced before. He staged a whirlwind French courtship—which means a frugal one—and one inspired evening, in the most flowery and elegant speech he could contrive, asked her to be "ze meestress of my fate." Mother had heard about Frenchmen and she listened to father's flamboyant proposal with some misgivings. Not until he had elaborated in more prosaic language was she certain just what his intentions were.

Although she was impressed by Father's well-trimmed mustache and goatee and his continental manners, Mother was very worried at first about falling in love with a foreigner who spoke

English with an accent. But when she discussed the matter with her sisters, they finally agreed that it was all right; after all, everybody in America seemed to speak English with an accent, so there was no need to be embarrassed by Father's.

They were married in 1889, by coincidence the same year in which Thomas Edison perfected the motion-picture machine. An astrologer once pointed out to me that motion pictures, Edison, and I were all conceived under the same sign of the zodiac, with Taurus the Bull ascending and Leo the Lion growling at Scorpio or something, so I was fated from birth to become a motion-picture star.

To me that is all about as important as film on the cutting-room floor, but I do know that my career has been as full of luck as a craps shooter's dreams, and I might never have become a motion-picture actor if I hadn't been born about the right time.

The event took place on February 18, 1890, and for one day my father lost all sense of proportion. He gave away fine cigars and poured vintage wine for his customers like a man possessed. Next morning he woke up with a headache and a grave suspicion that I would never be worth the money he had squandered in honor of my arrival. His doubts grew into a strong conviction as I complicated his life with diapers, bottles, and sleepless nights. When my brother Henry arrived a year and a half later, there was no quixotic demonstration or mad expenditure to celebrate this second complication.

With the advent of another son and heir Father grew ambitious to have a business of his own, so he gambled his savings and opened the Café Royal on Fifth Avenue in Pittsburgh. There he introduced his Pittsburgh patrons to a number of French delicacies, including frog's legs. He also gave the Café Royal a European touch by including a bottle of claret with the table-d'hôte dinners.

The success of the café was immediate, according to the files of the old *Pittsburgh Leader*. Shortly after opening the café Father was employing over sixty persons. At noon he conformed

to American ideas of a quick "business lunch" and usually served about 300 customers. But at dinner he spread himself on the table d'hôte, and many of Pittsburgh's most prominent men used to dine there. Steel millionaires, politicians, theatrical stars, the town's merchants, and well-known journalists were frequent patrons. The restaurant was a particular favorite of the editors and reporters of the *Pittsburgh Leader*, for the Café Royal and the newspaper occupied the same building.

While Father was establishing his new restaurant, Mother was learning a new language. When they were first married, she spoke only English and Gaelic; but Grand'mère Menjou lived with them and she spoke only French. Father and Grand'mère would carry on extensive conversations entirely in French, which left mother completely baffled. It was even worse when some of Father's French friends came to the house for a party and they all sat around sipping wine, conversing in French, and laughing over jokes that Mother didn't understand. The Irish are a talkative race, too, and Mother wanted to have her say, so she insisted that Father and Grand'mère teach her the language. It was a long and painful process as Father used to tell it, but Mother with Irish determination finally learned to converse in French—with a Gaelic accent.

If Mother and Father were miles apart in racial and linguistic characteristics, they were poles apart in temperament. That was probably a good thing, for Father had the most excitable and mercurial disposition I have ever known. If a chef put too much tarragon in the Bordelaise sauce, if a waiter spilled a plate of soup, if fresh asparagus were not available on the day Father wished to serve it, he would hit the ceiling in a fit of rage that could only be called superb. He would rave and rant, grasp his head in despair, spout French oaths, and pace the floor in the privacy of the café's kitchen. One would have thought the whole world had contrived to ruin his reputation and his business. Sometimes he would carry on for two days over some trifle that another man would have forgotten in five minutes.

It was at times like these that Mother's calm and placid nature would exert its influence on her temperamental spouse. Nothing ever ruffled her. Even when Father directed a flow of excited French on her blameless head, she remained quiet and unperturbed. Gradually Father's tantrum would expend itself and he would return, shamefaced and penitent, to normalcy.

Like most Frenchmen, Father had an unholy dread of poverty. To him financial failure was grim tragedy. A number of times, when he faced bankruptcy, his ebullient spirit nose-dived to earth in despondency. But Mother always brought him out of the doldrums, for she was never discouraged no matter how low their funds were or how imminent the poorhouse seemed. The Irish have faced poverty for so many generations that apparently the thought of being poor never worries them. She could always bolster Father's hopes by her own valiant nature and her determination to help him succeed again. And usually she was able to supply more practical encouragement in the form of cash that she had put away for a rainy day. She would go quietly off to the bank and come home with a nest egg that father knew nothing about.

One time when there was no nest egg, she went out and sold all her jewelry except her wedding ring. Father's pride suffered a severe blow when he learned what she had done, for the jewelry had been presents from him, and he would have dug ditches rather than ask her to sell it. But Mother was more practical.

"It's no sacrifice at all to get rid of that old stuff," she said. "Sure, we'll soon be on Easy Street again and you can buy me some nice new baubles."

Father's first failure came in the panic of 1897. He always claimed that the failure of the Café Royal was partly due to the expense of putting white tablecloths on the tables, a refinement to which his customers were unaccustomed.

When the café closed its doors, Mother came up with her first rainy-day nest egg, which tided us over while Father negotiated a lease on the Waldorf Hotel in Cleveland, Ohio. Then Mother

and Grand'mère packed our belongings and herded Henry and me into a day coach, and we followed Father to a new city and a new beginning.

Father prospered as manager of the Waldorf, and there he met many of the big industrialists of Cleveland. He persuaded a number of these wealthy men that Cleveland needed a restaurant as fine as any in New York. After all, Cleveland was a big city, so why shouldn't it have a big-city restaurant? In 1900 they helped him open the Casino Restaurant, the finest Cleveland had ever seen and one that was many years ahead of its time.

The Casino holds a special place in the memories of my youth, along with my first girl, my first cigar, and my first pair of long pants, for it was there that I saw my first motion-picture show.



### 3: *A Passing Fad*

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**P**ERHAPS the years have added glamour and magnitude to my recollection of the Casino, for I still think of it as a Taj Mahal among restaurants. I have dined in some of the finest eating places in the world, but in my memory none ever compared with Father's *coup de maître*. It must have been quite a place at that, for today my mother's face still lights up when it is mentioned, and many other old Clevelanders recall its cuisine, its wine cellar, and its multiplex grandeur with that heart-felt nostalgia commonly reserved for such turn-of-the-century frivolities as bock beer, bicycles built for two, and the bird on Nellie's hat.

The Casino was located at 325-327 Superior Street in downtown Cleveland. It was really several cafés in one. On the main floor was a bar and grill for gentlemen only. On the second floor was a subdued ladies' café, which did not mean that it was for ladies only, but that it was for gentlemen escorting ladies. On the third floor was a more sumptuous dining room where a gypsy orchestra played sentimental music from an overhanging balcony. The top floor was given over to Cleveland's first roof garden, which was open from eight until midnight. It was more like today's night clubs with one exception, as my mother points out—the music, the entertainment, and the dancing were as refined as you could want in your own home.

Shortly after the Casino opened Father became one of the first motion-picture exhibitors in Cleveland. He rented a projector and some films from New York to show his roof-garden customers this interesting novelty that, up to that time, most of them had only read about in the newspapers.

On the night when the first pictures were shown at the garden, Mother allowed Henry and me to view this amazing new phenomenon—pictures that moved. We gaped in amazement at our first view of Niagara Falls in action; we fell in love with a beautiful creature who performed a “skirt dance”; and when the Empire State Express appeared on the screen and thundered straight at us, we almost jumped out of our skins.

The audience merely applauded politely at these sights; but when Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders rode onto the scene, fresh from the Battle of San Juan Hill, they were greeted by a spontaneous ovation.

In the ten or fifteen minutes it took to unreel the series of short subjects that made up the bill that night, I became an inveterate movie fan. And I am still one of Hollywood’s best customers. Some movie actors like to brag that they never even go to see their own pictures. Perhaps I’m naïve, but I *like* the movies; I even stay for the second feature.

The day after the movies had been shown at the Casino Father reported to Mother and Grand’mère that the customers had been highly entertained by the novelty of the night before, but that they had all agreed that moving pictures were just a passing fad—like automobiles.

The Casino turned out to be one of my father’s most successful failures. It made him famous as a restaurateur, but it broke him. His next venture was the Bismarck Restaurant, a less pretentious but very fine restaurant, also in Cleveland, that he operated very successfully for a number of years.

Father had an instinct for setting a fine table and he loved good food and wine. He tried to get chefs and waiters who felt as he did and who understood the art of preparing and serving food. Some of his waiters stayed with him for years. Many of them were men he had found in European restaurants or on ocean liners during his trips to Europe. With chefs he was not so fortunate. No chef ever pleased him completely. He always claimed that good chefs were invariably madmen and that sooner

or later they went berserk. I have an idea that they got that way because of Father's exacting demands and Gallic temperament.

At heart Father was an entrepreneur. He believed that a fine restaurant was more than a place to purchase a meal; to him it was the stage setting for a gastronomic drama in which the proprietor was both director and leading man. Father happened to be a great director and a first-rate leading man. To tell the truth, he had a bit of ham in him, which I inherited.

Whenever a new waiter was hired, Father gave him a course of instructions in the performance of his tasks. A good waiter, he used to say, could enhance a well-prepared meal, while a bad one could ruin it. A fine restaurant owed an obligation to the customer to make him feel like a pampered guest, a very important fellow whose appetite and gastric juices were the personal concern of the chef, the waiters, and even the bus boy.

Of course, Father always gave a better performance than anybody else in the cast. When he met an important customer at the door, it was as though a foreign minister were greeting an ambassador. He did it with a flourish and a *savoir-faire* that was delightful to behold. He could have been Leo Ditrichstein, that most suave, most polished of all old-school actors. By the time Father had seated his customer, the man felt that to have ordered anything less than the best, including a vintage wine and a glass of brandy with his coffee, would have lowered his social standing in the community.

But there were practical duties connected with running a restaurant that irked Father. Watching the larder, purchasing supplies, keeping books, and bickering with wholesalers were not for him. In these matters Mother was his right hand. She worked with him in most of his restaurants from early morning till the dinner hour. As a result, Henry and I were practically raised by Grand'mère. And since she spoke nothing but French, we learned to speak that language as fluently as we spoke English.

She was no different from any grandmother. She was blind to our faults and defended our delinquencies with complete faith in

her belief that despite our devilish behavior our hearts were angelic. She spoiled us in every way that a grandmother could contrive; we were probably the most envied kids in our neighborhood because from breakfast until dinnertime we had no parental taskmasters.

Our home in Cleveland was on Wade Park Avenue. It was a big frame house with a wide porch and much gingerbread trim. There were five or six bedrooms upstairs, and we always seemed to have someone visiting us. When it wasn't a relative, our visitor was usually a minor celebrity or an impecunious musician from abroad whom Father had generously invited to stop in for a visit sometime, never expecting to see the fellow again.

I remember what an important event was Sunday morning breakfast in those days, for it was the one meal of the week at which the whole family got together. And since Sunday was almost the only day on which Mother and Father could entertain, we usually had guests for breakfast. In fact, I can't remember a Sunday when there were vacant chairs at the big dining-room table, and often extra chairs would have to be brought in from the parlor.

Those breakfasts started at eleven o'clock and continued as long as anybody could still swallow a mouthful. We had already had our *petit déjeuner*, consisting of coffee or chocolate and a buttered bun, and we had also been to church before we gathered in the dining room. Father sat at the head of the table wearing his best cutaway and a high wing collar. Mother sat at the foot arrayed in Sunday finery. Henry and I, dressed in our new suits and uncomfortably starched shirts, sat on her left, flanked by Grand-mère, who was there to help keep us properly subdued. The guests occupied the remaining chairs according to the protocol of first come, first served.

Although we called the meal "breakfast," it was more on the order of a banquet, since it was of magnificent proportions, lasted for hours, and was prepared and served by a chef and waiter from Father's restaurant. It started with vermouth cassis for the

grownups. After that came hors d'oeuvres, wine, laughter, and a veritable barrage of talk, in a mixture of French and English. Then came soup, made from *pot-au-feu*, and for a time the talking was augmented by smacking of lips and exclamations of gastro-nomic pleasure.

When the soup had been dispatched, everyone settled back for a period of relaxation with a glass of wine, more laughter, and still more conversation. After that the beef from the *pot-au-feu* was brought to the table and served with red wine and more smacking of lips. By the time roast chicken and white wine appeared, at least an hour or two had elapsed and the men were beginning to loosen their waistcoats. The chicken was followed in leisurely succession by watercress salad, cheese with apples, coffee, dessert, and champagne.

During the course of the meal Father usually inquired about Henry's and my deportment for the past week and asked how our schoolwork and music lessons were progressing. Before the guests Mother and Grand'mère could only perjure themselves with high praise for our conduct and accomplishments.

These Sunday breakfasts seemed interminably long to Henry and me, but they were usually enlivened by the stories Father would recount about happenings at the restaurant. He was a good storyteller, and on these occasions he would forget his usual dignity and mimic his customers and waiters with exaggerated expressions and gestures. His narratives never failed to bring roars of laughter from his family and guests, which must have been very gratifying to him, because he was an actor at heart.

Some of the stories he told us at those Sunday feasts I have never forgotten. There was one about Mr. Albert R. Davis, a wealthy Clevelander who was a regular customer at the Bismarck Restaurant. It seemed that Mr. Davis was especially fond of onion soup au gratin, which was one of the specialties of the restaurant. At lunch or dinner he almost invariably ordered onion soup.

One evening after Mr. Davis had started to eat his soup, he stopped suddenly and an expression of pained displeasure crossed his face. He beckoned to Father, who hurried to the wealthy man's table.

"Something wrong, Mr. Davis?"

"There certainly is, Albert. A most disgusting thing has happened. There is a cockroach in my soup."

Father's heart skipped a beat, but his expression never changed. He knew that if Mr. Davis thought that he had been served onion soup with a cockroach in it he would never return.

"You must be mistaken, Mr. Davis," he said. "We have no cockroaches in our kitchen."

"What do you call that?" demanded Mr. Davis, pointing to a dark object in the soup.

Father looked, shrugged, picked up a clean spoon, and dipped the offending object from the soup. Without hesitation he raised it to his lips, popped it into his mouth, chewed for a moment, then smacked his lips.

"Only a piece of onion that was overbrowned, Mr. Davis," he said. "I assure you it won't happen again."

Mr. Davis was extremely apologetic, explaining that he had come away from the office without his glasses. He should have known that Albert would never allow a cockroach to get into the onion soup. Father bowed, smiled, then retreated to the kitchen and gave the chef a dressing down.

When Father finished telling us this story Henry and I asked in unison, "But was it a cockroach, Papa?"

He and Mother exchanged glances and then Father shrugged. "How can I tell?" he answered. "They say that a French fried onion and a cockroach taste exactly the same."

Some of Father's best stories concerned the various escapades of his chefs and the trouble they caused him. He used to have a great deal of difficulty getting satisfactory chefs and he came to the conclusion that good ones were always slightly daft. He claimed that if a chef led a normal, law-abiding life he was no

good. He might be all right for a hash house or a beanery but he was not fit for the kitchen of the Bismarck.

If he checked up on a chef who was applying for a job and discovered that his former employer thought the fellow was unreliable, Father was not discouraged.

"How unreliable?" he would ask.

"He gets drunk every Saturday night."

"Well," Father would say, "is that all?"

"He's also a bigamist."

"That is his private affair. What else?"

"He spent four years in jail for arson!"

"He sounds like a very fine chef," Father would say, and he would probably hire the man forthwith.

Father always claimed that the best chef he ever had was Alphonse, who had left New York City while out on bail after having being charged with carrying a concealed weapon. One night, prior to the regular dinner hour, Alphonse prepared a *filet mignon* with sauce béarnaise for Father's meal.

After he had dined Father went out to the kitchen to tell Alphonse how much he had enjoyed the sauce. As he approached the chef he happened to notice a carving knife lying on a table and picked it up to replace it in its rack. But Alphonse, for some reason, thought Father was going for him with the knife. With the agility of a cat he leaped over a chopping block and crouched on the other side waiting for Father to make a move.

"Be careful, my frandl!" warned Alphonse. "Ze knife she ces queek, but ze revolvair ees queekaire!"

With that he pulled a revolver out of his hip pocket and fired two shots into the ceiling, at which point Father went out of the kitchen in a very great hurry. After that he communicated with his favorite chef by notes, refusing to fire him despite his eccentricities; but the fellow finally left town just ahead of the sheriff.



When greeting guests in his restaurant, Father always had the *savoir-faire* of a foreign minister.



Mother's maiden name was Nora Joyce. She came from County Galway, Ireland, and charmed my father with her Irish brogue.



Henry and I were practically raised by Grandmother Menjou. Since she spoke nothing but French, we learned to speak that language as fluently as we spoke English.





When I was two and one-half years old, Mother dressed me in formal attire for a visit to the photographer.



In 1906 Father decided that Henry and I needed the discipline of a firmer hand than Grand'mère's, so we were sent to Culver Military Academy.



When I was fifteen years old, I acquired my first suit with long trousers and felt very much a man of the world.

## 4: *The Growth of a Mustache*

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**H**ENRY and I started to school about the time we came to Cleveland. We were sent to St. Joseph's Seminary just outside Cleveland at Nottingham, Ohio. Having been pampered and spoiled by our grandmother we hated it, because if we tried to put anything over on the nuns we got a whack on the hands with a ruler.

We didn't like the food, either, for we were used to good French cooking; but we had to eat everything they put on our plates. Henry didn't like turnips and I detested squash. This was unfortunate, for I'm sure we got one or the other twice a day. We would slip the nauseating stuff off our plates and hide it in our pockets. After we left the table we would hurry to the dormitory and empty our pockets under the bed of a boy who used to bully us. When the nuns found the pile of dried squash and turnips under his bed, they gave him a delightful whacking and set him to saying his beads for the rest of the day.

After a year or two at St. Joseph's, we entered the Rockwell Public School in Cleveland and Father decided it was time for us to take music lessons. We studied the piano, but Henry didn't like it so Father bought him a flute. We used to practice together, playing duets.

One day we were playing a duet with a complicated flute solo. Outside the window the neighborhood gang was yelling for us to come out and play ball, so I kept playing faster and faster and Henry got lost in the runs and cadenzas of his flute solo. Finally he shouted for me to stop, but I kept right on going to-

ward the finish. Resentment welled within Henry's breast; he turned red in the face, raised his flute, and smashed it over my head. The fight that followed was a dandy. When Father came home, he gave us each a tanning and made us pay for the repairs to the flute out of our allowances.

Father was not usually a strict disciplinarian, but when Henry and I tried his patience beyond endurance, he would grab a switch and go for us. Then we would dash out the front door while he pursued us, the tails of his cutaway flapping behind him. As we circled the house Mother would stand on the front porch imploring Father to stop making a spectacle of himself. But Father was no quitter. He usually continued the chase until we retreated up a tree, where he would manage to get in a couple of good swipes at us as we went up.

When we graduated from grammar school, Henry and I entered East High School in Cleveland and got our first jobs as actors. We were on our way to a nickelodeon one Saturday when we passed the Euclid Avenue Opera House. Over the marquee was advertised, "Next Week—BEN HUR—with William Farnum." We stopped to look at the pictures in the lobby and spied a sign that announced, "Supers Wanted—inquire stage door."

Henry and I ran a race to the stage door where we presented ourselves to the stage manager. He agreed to hire us provided we could supply a letter from our mother giving us permission to stay out of school on Wednesday afternoon for the matinee.

Over the week end we wrestled with the problem of how to get such a letter and finally hatched a scheme. At noon on Monday we told Grand'mère that since Mother was not home she would have to write a letter for us to the school principal. The letter must say that Henry and I had permission to stay after school on Wednesday to perform a piano and flute duet for the school assembly. She beamed with pride and wrote the letter. Of course, it was in French, because that was the only language she knew. When we presented the letter to the stage man-

ager that night, he couldn't make head or tail of it, but I obligingly translated it for him.

"Monsieur," I read, "It will give to me *beaucoup de plaisir* to have Henry and Adolphe remain away from *l'école* on Wednesday afternoon to play in the show. I hope they will perform most excellently. *Avec mes sentiments les plus distingués*.—Mrs. Claire Menjou."

Henry and I were given oversize togas and pushed onto the stage that very night. After a week in Ben Hur we became established supers at the Euclid Avenue Opera House. That season we "acted" in *The Pit*, with William Lackaye, and *Romeo and Juliet*, with Sothern and Marlowe.

We learned to make our exits and entrances without tripping over the tormentors and to say "walla-walla-walla-rhubarb-rhubarb," which is what supers have been saying for hundreds of years regardless of whether the mob is storming the gates or merely chatting in the public square. At every performance I used to search for new and startling ways of saying "walla-walla-walla" in hopes that somebody would single me out as a superior performer and give me a real line of dialogue. But I was doomed to disappointment, for I'm afraid no one has ever discovered a way to make "walla-walla-walla" an outstanding speech.

But some years later I found out that in Hollywood quite a few supernumeraries, distinguished for their lack of talent, were able to advance themselves to highly paid careers by simply switching the old "walla-walla-walla" cry to "yeezzir, yeezzir, yeezzir."

When Father learned that Henry and I had been playing hooky from high school to play-act with low characters of the stage, he declared that we were becoming incorrigibles and that a firmer hand than Grand'mère's was needed to guide us. He and Mother were too busy at the restaurant to take over the task, so he resolved to send us to some school where we would learn discipline. The one he selected was Culver Military Academy in

Indiana. We arrived there in the fall of 1906, free of inhibitions and cocky as a couple of fox terriers.

Culver is a miniature or junior-size West Point. New arrivals are called plebes and a plebe is the dirt beneath an upperclassman's shoes; but to add insult to injury, a plebe has to clean and polish the shoes while he is being stepped on. Henry and I certainly learned about discipline at Culver, and we soon told ourselves that if we ever got out of "stir" and back to Grandmère we would obey her slightest whim.

During the year we were in Culver Father became very well acquainted with Charles Schmidt, who was chief engineer for the Peerless Automobile Company. Mr. Schmidt was naturally enthusiastic about the future of the automobile and he convinced Father that the world was soon to be taken over by engineers. Father questioned him about the best place to send his two sons in order to prepare them for careers as engineers, and Mr. Schmidt recommended Cornell University. So the following fall Henry and I were sent to "Pop" Stiles's University Preparatory School in Ithaca to "bone" for Cornell and engineering.

My instructor in mathematics at University Prep was the late Louis Wolheim. He had a mind like a calculating machine and a face that looked as though it had been run over by a truck. It took Louis only three days to discover that I was helpless when wrestling with an algebraic equation. He dragged me through advanced algebra and solid geometry by brute strength and sheer genius as a teacher. And I have a suspicion that it was because of his yearlong struggle to knock math into my head that he gave up the teaching profession in despair and went to Broadway to look for a job as an actor.

Although Louis Wolheim became well publicized as an intellectual Thespian who had once tutored Cornell students in higher mathematics, it is not so generally known that he also tutored them in less academic accomplishments. He was an astute student of the cardboards and the "galloping dominoes." Whenever "well-heeled" students of Cornell gathered for a big

poker or crap game, Louis would sniff out the game like a bird dog scenting quail. And when the game broke up the chips or cash were usually piled in front of teacher. He probably made a larger income by practicing the science of probability and chance than he did by teaching it.

He was also a very handy man with a pool cue. In this art he was ambidextrous, but he played best when he handled the cue with his left hand. He told me that one time when he was broke he walked into a pool hall and got into a game with a traveling man who fancied himself a pool player. Louis started out playing right handed. After losing a couple of dollar bets, he finally bet his opponent one dollar to ten that he could beat him left handed. The traveling man broke the balls, after which Louis ran twenty-nine in succession. At that point the sucker paid off without bothering to shoot again.

I entered Cornell a year ahead of Henry, in the Class of 1912. My roommate was Leopold Tschirky, whose father was Oscar of the Waldorf. Oscar and my father had been friends for many years, and when they decided to make engineers of their sons, it was only natural that we should end up as roommates.

My career as a mechanical engineer was rather short lived. I tried hard to make the grade, but it was utter madness for me to have thought that I could ever learn engineering. I had to take such mysterious subjects as analytical geometry, differential calculus, physics, and engineering principles. Within two months I was so helplessly entangled in a morass of mathematical formulas that I adopted an attitude of *laissez faire* and settled down to having a good time. This made college life much easier. I had more time to devote to my friends, got around to all the best pool halls and bowling alleys, and developed a wide acquaintance among the frail sex.

Along about the middle of the year Father suddenly appeared in Ithaca. I knew at once that the heat was on.

"How are you doing wiz your studies, Adolphe?" he asked.

"It's tough sledding," I replied; "but I'm doing my best."

"Ze dean of ze college wrote me a lettaire," he said, looking very grim. "E does not zink you study enough each night."

"I stay up till one or two o'clock," I answered truthfully. "What more can I do?"

To get his mind off the subject I took him for a walk around the campus and finally suggested a game of billiards, since I knew it was his favorite pastime. We dropped into a pool hall and immediately I knew I had made a mistake. The habitués of the joint all greeted me familiarly.

"You come to zis place often, Adolphe?" Father inquired, as he chalked his cue.

"Oh no," I assured him. "Just now and then on a Saturday night."

Then we started to play. After I had won two games from him he gave me a dour look and said, "Perhaps, son, you spend too much time studying ze wrong subject."

Fortunately, when I flunked my finals at the end of the year, Father was in Europe, where he had gone to replenish the wine cellar of the Bismarck. Henry, on the other hand, had passed his entrance exams to Cornell with flying colors. Had Father been home, we would have had pyrotechnics early that year; but as it was, he received the news in Paris, where such dreary matters as college grades are taken lightly.

Meanwhile, Henry and I discovered that before leaving for Europe Father had sold his horses and purchased an automobile. We could hardly believe the good news, for Father was a die-hard when it came to automobiles.

The car was a secondhand Garford. Its most distinctive characteristic was that it had only one headlight, imbedded squarely in the middle of the radiator. Coming down the road at night it looked like a motorcycle, which is why Garford owners were always getting their fenders sheared off.

We drove the car all summer until Father came back from Europe. By that time the Garford, which must have had a rugged past even before Father bought it, was ready to be turned

out to pasture. The cylinders were full of carbon, the gears were greaseless, the tires were threadbare, and the stuffing was leaking out of the upholstery in the rear seat. When Father took the car out for a drive and discovered what we had done to it, he was so mad he wanted to take us both on with bare knuckles and no holds barred. We had to keep out of his sight for several days.

When he took the car to a garage, he found that it needed \$300 worth of repairs to make it healthy again. That was the last we ever saw of the Garford. He left it there with a "For Sale" sign on it.

That fall Henry entered the Engineering College at Cornell, but since I was no longer welcome there, I switched to the College of Liberal Arts. By this time I knew my way around, so I arranged a study schedule that would not interfere with my extracurricular activities. It consisted of English 1, a subject that I knew from past experience I could cope with, English Drama, which fitted in more or less with my yearnings to be an actor, French 3, a subject I could easily have taught, French 12, another pushover, and Geology 1, especially designed to help dullards collect enough credits to stumble through a college education.

With a setup like that I was really in a position to enjoy college life—and I did. I soon became prominent as an entertainer at various smokers, banquets, and vaudeville shows of the Class of 1912. But I was not particular. If any other class wanted me to do a monologue, to sing a comedy song with piano solo, or merely to tell a few funny stories, I was always available. My specialty was impersonations; I killed them when I impersonated Mary Garden singing her big aria in *Thaïs*.

Besides being an entertainer I participated extensively in baseball, football, and track—by sitting in a grandstand and cheering. The only sports I cared to indulge in personally were Kelly pool and bowling, because they did not interfere with



beer drinking. I bowled for Ithaca in the New York State Bowling League and had an average of 180. My average at beer drinking was much better.

During my junior year at Cornell, on the morning of February 18, 1911, I woke up too late to get to my eight-o'clock class, which was not at all unusual; but when I looked in my mirror, I saw that somehow a subtle change had come over me. At first I couldn't realize what it was. Then, suddenly I remembered. It was my birthday! I was twenty-one years old.

"Adolphe," I said to myself—probably with gestures—"you must do something about this."

So that morning I left my upper lip unshaved, and I have never shaved it since.

At the end of my junior year, when I returned to Cleveland, the mark of my maturity had reached twirling length. I was wearing a snappy Norfolk jacket, peg-top pants, a 3-inch starched collar that was slowly strangling me to death, and yellow oxfords with bulldog toes. I smoked a pipe with a half-pint bowl and conversed almost entirely in a collegiate patois that baffled both Father and Mother. On my bedroom wall I tacked numerous pennants, dance programs, souvenirs, and campus mementos, as well as the photographs of five or six beautiful young ladies, to all of whom, by their inscriptions, I was virtually promised in marriage.

Father commented caustically on the end results of my three years at Cornell; it was apparent to him that the advantages of a college education were highly overrated. He opined that if I intended to take unto myself a harem, I would soon be in need of a very successful business career.

A short time before, due to poor health, Father had sold his interest in the Bismarck Restaurant; but since then he had been offered a lease on the Berghoff, a small hotel with a bar and two dining rooms that was owned by a large brewing company. His illness prevented him from assuming the full-time duties of

a hotel and restaurant business, but he offered to help me take over the Berghoff, provided I would spend the summer under the tutelage of his good friend Max Miller, who operated the Eastman Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Although I had already been infected by the Thespian germ, the instinct for a Frenchman's son to follow in his father's footsteps is always very strong, so I agreed to become a restaurateur and entrained for Hot Springs.

I shall always remember Hot Springs with a certain amount of nostalgia. I had free board and room and a small salary. My short course in operating a hostelry gave me a variety of jobs from the kitchen to the hotel desk that were neither too menial nor too difficult. And I had sufficient time off to enjoy the benefits of the Springs, which consisted mostly of numerous gambling houses and beautiful women. I returned to Cleveland in the late fall, rich in experience, long of mustache, and short of cash.

We tried to make the Berghoff the same sort of place the Bismarck had been under Father's management. Naturally, I was never the restaurateur that my father was, except at garnering publicity. I made pals of all the newspapermen in town and managed to wangle columns of free advertising for the Berghoff. Prominent out-of-town visitors usually found themselves being interviewed at the Berghoff. When private banquets were held at the Berghoff, I always saw to it that they were mentioned in the society columns. And if my name appeared for any reason in the Cleveland papers, I was always "manager of the Berghoff" or even "manager de luxe."

When Oscar of the Waldorf and his wife came through town on their silver wedding "honeymoon," they were guests of the Berghoff and rated column interviews in every paper with pictures. Oscar spoke enthusiastically in every interview of the excellent cuisine at the Berghoff.

The restaurant soon became a favorite dining spot for celebrities of the show and sport world as well as for prominent citizens of Cleveland. I first met Al Jolson while managing the

Berghoff. After his performance one night he came to the restaurant with a party of friends. I telephoned a few newspaper cronies and then asked Jolson if he would sing a song. He obliged and of course the customers wanted more. To my delight he sang at least half a dozen encores. It was wonderful publicity for the restaurant.

Great entertainers like Raymond Hitchcock, Joseph Cawthorn, Gus Edwards, W. C. Fields, and Richard Carle often dined at the Berghoff when their shows were in Cleveland. During the two weeks Richard Carle was in town he put on a party every night after his performance and the champagne always flowed freely. But instead of paying cash, he signed the checks. After a week or ten days his bill was about \$600 and Father began losing sleep over the size of the account. He didn't trust actors. So I cornered Carle's manager one night and collected the bill personally. Father's insomnia was immediately cured.

But the success of the Berghoff and Adolphe Menjou, manager, lasted only about a year. Following the election of 1912 Cleveland suffered a depression. Business was bad all over town. At the Berghoff it was terrible; our prices were too high and our clientele was too select.

When we closed the doors, we had chits from numerous Clevelanders totaling about \$1,700. With a very jaundiced eye my father totaled these vouchers that I had allowed friends and special customers to sign, then handed them to me.

"There is your stake in life, Adolphe," he said. "Any part of these that you can collect belongs to you."

It took me three weeks to do the job. I wrote dunning letters, I rang doorbells, I pleaded and coaxed; and finally I collected all but forty dollars of that money. Father was amazed.

"You will still be a successful businessman, Adolphe," he predicted.

"Not me," I told him. "I'm going to New York to be an actor."

Father was aghast to think that a son with such a talent for collecting money wanted to become an actor. But at last he

gave up arguing with me, and I bought my ticket for New York. In my trunk Mother packed not only my clothes but also six bottles of champagne and enough canned sardines, caviar, anchovies, stuffed olives, and similar delicacies to start a delicatessen. These had been rescued from the stock of the Berghoff.

"At least," Mother said tearfully, "you'll not be starving to death."

## 5: *The Duke of Brooklyn*

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**I** WAS twenty-three years old when I arrived on Broadway; in my pocket was a wad of old-style, 100-cent-on-the-dollar folding money; my mustache, waxed and pointed with loving care, was as jaunty and debonair as my spirit. But Broadway gave me the cold shoulder, the bum's rush, and a fast "NO."

The day I arrived in town I found a room on Lexington Avenue, donned my shepherd plaid and a snappy gray Homburg, then headed for Times Square to land a job. I was brushed off in rapid succession at the offices of Daniel Frohman, Klaw and Erlanger, David Belasco, George Tyler, Florenz Ziegfeld, and the Messrs. Cohan and Harris. Young men with mustaches were not in demand that season.

But I was not easily discouraged; I guessed that it might take as long as two or three weeks to find a job. So I telephoned a charming divorcee I had met in Cleveland a few months before and made a date for that night. We went to Rector's for dinner, then to a musical comedy, and afterward we had champagne at the Café de Paris.

My new girl seemed to get the idea that I was a young man with an inexhaustible income, and for the next few weeks I spent money as though it were cigar coupons. But I will say she knew her way around. We dined at a different restaurant almost every night—Churchill's, Keene's, Luchow's, Shanley's, Trainor's, Riesenweber's, the Hofbrau, and a dozen others. We went to see Alla Nazimova in *Bella Donna*, George Arliss in *Disraeli*, Doris Keene and William Courtney in *Romance*, George M. Cohan in

*Broadway Jones*, Billie Burke in *Mind-the-Paint Girl*, and Leo Ditrichstein in *The Concert*.

We also saw *Queen Elizabeth* in four reels with Sarah Bernhardt and Lou Telegen. This was the first movie in which important stage stars had appeared and also was the picture that started Adolph Zukor's fabulous film career.

Meanwhile I still had visions of myself as a Broadway star. Every afternoon I made the rounds of the theatrical offices and the agencies. No one ever had more confidence in his own ability and inspired less in the people who had jobs to offer. They turned me down for everything from chorus boy to stage manager.

After three months in the big city I counted up my cash reserve and realized that I would have to give up my stage career and look for some more prosaic job. So I began to call on all my father's friends in the hotel and restaurant business. They all greeted me with big smiles until they learned why I was there; then the smiles vanished and faraway looks came into their eyes. They all had the same answer: "Business is bad—we're not hiring anybody."

I discovered that when you are broke you are about as popular as a wet dog in the parlor. Things went from bad to worse, and I began to dip into the sardines and the anchovies that Mother had packed in my trunk. I would go out and buy a box of soda crackers and make a meal out of *canapés* and champagne.

About this time Henry arrived in New York and saved my life. I might mention that Henry had discovered that he was no engineer, either. After his freshman year at Cornell he had, for some unaccountable reason, switched to the College of Agriculture. Now, after two years of book farming, he had landed a job as assistant dairy manager at the Munson Crosby estate near Rhinebeck, New York. But more important, just before leaving Ithaca he had won \$200 in a crap game.

Henry loaned me twenty dollars and said that he would try

to get me a farm job, too. He had a sturdy frame, so he thought nothing of tackling hard work. I, on the other hand, was strictly a mass of vitamin deficiency, but I told him I would try anything for three square meals a day.

Two days later Henry wired me that he had found a job for me on a neighboring farm. The next afternoon Mr. Joe Greenhalgh, my new boss, drove his wagon up to the Poughkeepsie YWCA and found me waiting for him with my trunk and my suitcase. I was wearing my best city clothes—my blue double-breasted and a derby hat. When I introduced myself, Farmer Greenhalgh's mouth dropped open and for a moment he just stared at me. Finally he shook his head and said glumly, "You don't look much like a farm hand, but maybe you'll fool me."

It was pitch dark the next morning when I was awakened by a loud pounding on the door of my room. The horny fist of Farmer Greenhalgh was gently rousing me for a short day's work. I think that man must have been a sun worshiper. He greeted it every morning as it rose and he hated to see it go down at night.

I stumbled out of bed, groped my way into some old clothes, and followed my boss to the cow barns. He pointed to nine cows that were waiting to be milked.

"You start at this end and I'll start at the other," said Joe, "and we'll meet in the middle."

I had once seen a fellow milk a cow and it had looked like a very simple job. I am still convinced that it takes no brains, but I never learned how. When Joe had milked eight cows, I was still trying to get milk out of the spigots on cow number nine.

Joe saw at once that he had a cluck on his hands. He said, "I thought you were supposed to be one of those educated farmers from Cornell University."

I knew then that Henry had lied to get me the job, so I said, "That's right. I went to Cornell but I don't take the course in cow milking till next semester."

At the end of the week Joe fired me, and I'm sure he never thought much of Cornell's agricultural students after that. But I had no trouble getting a job on the Vincent Astor estate. It was haying time and they needed fifteen or twenty men to pitch hay. That sounded like a nice bucolic pastime, so I signed up for twenty-five dollars a month.

The first day on the job I stepped on a rake and the handle came up and hit me squarely on the nose. It was very funny to everybody but me; my nose swelled up until I looked like Jimmy Durante with a mustache.

Then the hard work started. I never went through such a grueling experience in my life. The boss put a pitchfork in my hand and told me to start pitching. I had to lift huge bundles of hay from the ground and toss them up on the hayrack. It was broiling hot; my hands were soon covered with blisters; I thought my back would break. I finally begged the boss to give me a job in the barn where it was shady. But the barn was still hotter and the air was so full of chaff I couldn't breathe. At the end of a week I was having nightmares. I would dream that I was buried in a pile of hay a mile high and had to eat my way out.

At the end of two weeks the boss handed me a check for \$12.50 and told me I had made good. I was such a success I could have a permanent job if I wanted it. But I knew it wouldn't be very permanent because I couldn't last that long, so at the end of the month I quit.

I landed back in New York with two bottles of champagne left, a few sardines, and a check signed by Vincent Astor for \$12.50. I walked into the bar at the Astor Hotel, slapped the check on the bar, and ordered a Manhattan cocktail. The bartender looked at the check with a fishy eye until he saw the signature on it, which changed his manner completely. I drank my Manhattan and ate a free lunch that would have foundered Wally Beery.

That night I stayed at the Mills Hotel. I thought to myself,



"This is the lowest point to which a Menjou has ever sunk. The former manager of the Berghoff sleeping in a charitable institution! If Father ever hears about this it will kill him."

After a few days at the Mills Hotel I knew I was licked. New York had cut me down to size. I was developing something that had never been heard of in the Menjou family—an inferiority complex. So I went back to Cleveland to get some good French cooking and to recover my poise.

Cleveland was much kinder to me. Inside of a week I had a job as traveling salesman for the MacAdams Haberdashery. I took two trunkloads of samples and started a tour of Ohio. It wasn't a very good job and I didn't like it, but it was a job.

Then one day I received a letter from Father. He was going to New York to open the Maison Menjou. Would I go along as his assistant? Would I! The haberdashery business lost a salesman that same day.

A few weeks later the paint had hardly dried on the new sign above the Maison Menjou at Broadway and Ninety-first Street when I became a movie actor. That first job at Vitagraph, playing the role of a ringmaster, happened so easily that I wondered why I hadn't thought of trying the movies months before. But once I had discovered the five-dollar-a-day bonanza, I made the most of it.

That winter I became one of the regular extras at Vitagraph, earning my five dollars almost daily at the studio and working nights at the Maison Menjou. In a short time I began to take on the gloss of a professional. I knew that gestures had to be slow, that action at right angles to the camera was bad, that the directors liked the ham cut thick. And I discovered that it was my mustache that landed jobs for me.

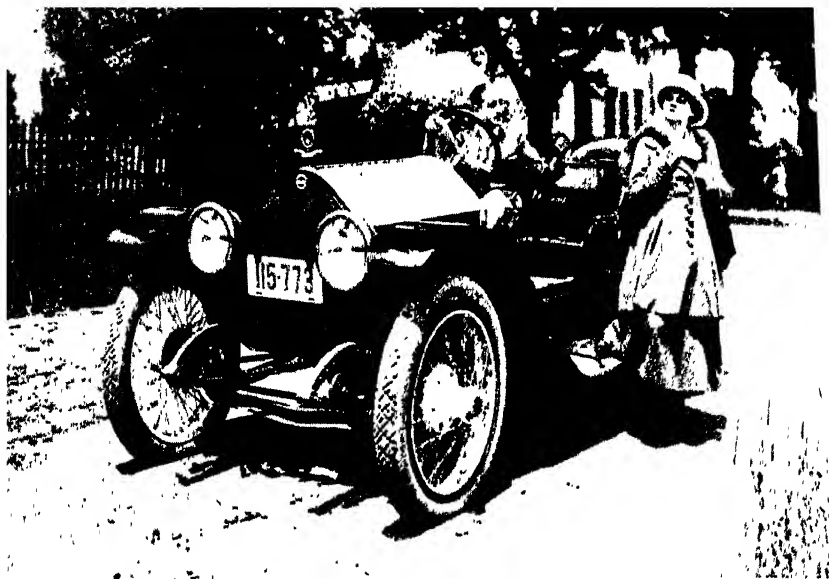
In those days most pictures were one- and two-reelers, so the hero and the villain had to be identified quickly for the benefit of the audience. A mustache was the mark of a villain; the audience knew that anybody who twirled a mustache was either a rich city slicker or a foreign nobleman.



In *The Amazons*, 1914, adapted from an Arthur Wing Pinero play, I was Count De Grival. Already I had played so many foreign-noblemen parts that my nickname was "Duke." The gentleman with me is Edgar Norton, well known for his comic Britisher and butler roles.



The star of *The Amazons* was Marguerite Clark (center), who was second only to Mary Pickford in popularity. This triple clinch is the happy ending, and the grouping shows that stage technique was still being used by film directors.



borrowed a Stutz Bearcat roadster from my friend John Liggott, heir to a tobacco fortune, and thus secured a fine part in *The Blue Envelope*. I also received \$7.50 a day for the car. The disdandful young lady is Lillian Walker, known to movie fans as "Dimples."



*The Moth*, 1917, was my last picture before going to war. I played the kind of villain that usually died a horrible death just to make the audience happy. The star was Norma Talmadge.

When they wanted a villain who was just medium wicked, he would be the profligate son of a millionaire or maybe a society crook with designs on the daughter of the small-town banker as well as the upstairs maid. But when they cooked up a story with a real, low-down nasty, he was always a foreign nobleman, with hemophilia, three discarded mistresses, and a yen to marry an innocent and beautiful heiress. That was where I shone. Casting directors thought I looked the part.

I played my first aristocratic heavy with Norma Talmadge. The audience hated me so wholeheartedly that Vitagraph quickly made me a French viscount in a picture with Lillian Walker, known to the fans as "Dimples."

When I realized that they had me pegged as a foreign-nobleman type, I began to live the part. I bought a pair of white spats, an Ascot tie, and a walking stick; and I tried to look as decadent as possible. It paid off, too. I did so many of those parts for Vitagraph that my nickname in Brooklyn was "The Duke."

After a few weeks in the business I learned where the Edison and Biograph studios were located and began to play foreigners and dissolute heavies for them, too. It was while I was twirling my mustache at Anita Stewart, a favorite star of those days, that I heard about the war between the motion-picture trust and the independent producers.

One morning a fellow actor showed up in the dressing room at Vitagraph with a black eye, which he carefully painted out so that he could work that day.

"Swinging door?" I inquired cheerily.

"Independent picture," he replied. "A bunch of sluggers for the trust tried to stop the shooting and we gave them the bum's rush. It was some fight."

This was Greek to me, so I made further inquiries and learned a few of the facts of movie life. It seemed that Thomas Edison owned the basic patents on motion-picture cameras and projectors and that the Edison company with nine other producing

companies had pooled their interests and formed a trust for the purposes of stabilizing the business and controlling the rental price of films. No other companies were to be allowed to make motion pictures.

This squeeze play left important film companies like Fox, IMP (later to be known as Universal Pictures), Keystone, and others out in the cold. But none of these companies intended to be driven out of business, regardless of the trust's powerful legal position, so a free-for-all fight started.

The independents, driven to cover by court injunctions, began shooting their pictures in hide-out lofts or on location in the suburbs of New York. Some of them fled to California, Mexico, and even Cuba. When court orders failed to stop them from making their pictures, the trust hired private detectives to hunt down the outlaws, gain entrance to their temporary studios, and smash their camera equipment. Pitched battles often ensued, with the actors joining in. Sometime the trust's detectives would win and sometime they would be put to flight.

My actor friend explained that he had been working on location in Staten Island when the strong-arm squad of the trust had closed in on them. The whole company joined in the battle, saved the camera, and drove off the so-called detectives. Next day they finished the picture in a new location.

I wondered why he should risk his neck over somebody else's battle. With nine picture companies in the trust, why run the risk of a black eye by working for one of the independents?

"Because," he explained, "some of the independents pay actors ten dollars a day."

Ten dollars a day! That was really a mad expenditure of money. I began looking for work with the independents and soon was playing parts for World Films, IMP, Metro, and others.

One time we went way out on Long Island, halfway to Montauk Point, to shoot on a makeshift outdoor stage. When the company left New York, it was a fine, clear day; but by the time we reached our destination, a gale was whipping in off the ocean.

The dining-room set that the stagehands had constructed on an open platform was in danger of being blown away; the tablecloth had to be tacked to the table to keep it in place; the walls of the room quivered and swayed.

It looked as though the director would have to call off the shooting for that day, which would mean paying everybody for a day's work without getting a foot of film. He paced the floor for a while, then suddenly got an idea.

"To hell with the wind!" he exclaimed. "We'll shoot the scene and insert a subtitle reading 'That day there was a storm at sea.'"

When the picture came out and the audiences read that subtitle, they thought it was part of the plot. They kept waiting for some dramatic twist of the story hinging on a shipwreck. But that was the last time the wind was ever seen or mentioned.

Another time I went on location with an independent company to Lakehurst, New Jersey. We had already shot some scenes in a New York loft in which I had worn a gray bowler hat as a part of my foreign-nobleman wardrobe. When we reached Lakeside, I got off the train and forgot my gray bowler, which was in a paper bag on the parcel rack above my seat.

It was a major catastrophe! The director began planning how to leave me out of the picture. He finally decided to change the plot of the story and insert a subtitle saying that the Duc de Rochefort had suffered a sudden heart attack and had gone on an ocean voyage. In desperation I got the station agent to phone ahead to the next station. My hat was recovered and sent back on a northbound train, arriving just in time for me to reach the shooting location and earn my ten dollars.

During the summer of 1914 I took a short whirl at vaudeville in a sketch called *The Grafter*. The author-director-star was Ernie Carr, an old-time vaudevillian. I was the juvenile love interest at a salary of \$27.50. The week we opened the act at New Britain, Connecticut, Germany attacked Belgium, starting World War I. In New York the stock exchange closed; it looked as though Germany was winning the war; people were going around

with faces so long their chins were on their wishbones; and at the Maison Menjou Father was going broke again.

When I learned that Ernie Carr and his act were scheduled to play Cleveland, I jumped the show and caught a train back to New York. I didn't have the courage to appear in my old home town acting in a third-rate vaudeville sketch.

The Maison Menjou folded shortly after I returned to New York. By this time a lot of people had told me that I would never get any place as an actor. Ernie Carr had been very explicit about it. Others were more kindly in their criticisms. Several movie directors had pointed out that my face was all wrong for a juvenile or a leading man, that I could only play young heavies or foreigners—and they were not the fellows who made the big money.

So I decided that the smart thing for me to do would be to help Father with the new place he was planning at Lynbrook, Long Island. We opened the Villa Menjou in the spring of 1915. Father had figured that motorists on their way to Long Beach would stop for luncheons and dinners. He was wrong. Most of them went by the Villa Menjou with throttles wide open, throwing large clouds of dust in the faces of the Menjous, *père et fils*.

But one day a big Locomobile pulled up in front of our place and two people whom I recognized stepped out. They were Josie Collins, a well-known musical-comedy actress, and Billy Sheer, general manager of Equitable Pictures Corporation. A moment later we were ushering them to one of the best tables.

After Father had taken their orders, I stayed behind and found an opportunity to remark to Miss Collins that I had seen her recently in her latest show. As one artiste to another I wished to congratulate her on her charming performance.

"You are in show business?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes," I assured her. "Temporarily at liberty. I perform in the cinema."

"What a wonderful type," she enthused. Then to Mr. Sheer, "Haven't you a part for him in your new movie?"

Mr. Sheer, it seemed, was sending a company of actors to Florida to shoot a picture. They were to leave in a few days. He looked me over carefully. I twirled my mustache and exposed my profile. He wasn't sure, but Miss Collins persisted. I was just the type. Finally Mr. Sheer got down to business. Did I have a wardrobe?

I owned exactly two suits, but I assured Mr. Sheer that I had a complete wardrobe.

"Tails?"

"Naturally."

"Cutaway?"

"But of course."

"Sport clothes?"

"Certainly."

"The salary is seventy-five a week," said Mr. Sheer. "Report to my office at ten o'clock on Tuesday morning."

When Father heard the news, he threw up his hands. What manner of son had he spawned? Hadn't I frittered away enough time at this movie nonsense? Hadn't we already settled this foolishness?


I explained to him about the fortune I was to get—seventy-five dollars a week! For a moment he was nonplused, but then he brushed the money aside. It was temporary. There was no future for a ham actor—one day flush, the next day broke. Did I want to become a no-good, a dead beat, a hobo? But I was stubborn. I had my mother's Irish blood and her silent backing, too. Dead beat or hobo, I still wanted to be an actor. So finally, with a shrug that lifted his coattails practically to his shoulder blades, Father accepted the inevitable, and Mother once more packed my bag.

"If anything goes wrong," she said, "come home for a good meal. We've plenty to eat, praise the Lord, if nothing else."



## 6: *The Parisian Type*

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N Monday I arrived in New York with four dollars in cash and no wardrobe. The only thing I had that could be converted into cash was a diamond ring Father had given me on my twenty-first birthday. I went to Simpson's hock shop and pawned my ring for sixty-five dollars.

Next I rented a room opposite the Astor Hotel for four-fifty a week—in advance. Then I went to Monroe's (walk up one flight and save ten dollars) and ordered a full dress and a cutaway. They fixed me up in twenty minutes. The collar of the cutaway was too large, so it made me look like a curious turtle, and the sleeves of the dress coat were a little too long; but I had a wardrobe.

I had not only a wardrobe but also a little over six dollars left. In those days six dollars in my pocket always seemed like twice as much as I needed, so I decided to call up a girl with whom I was madly in love and shoot the six dollars. The first one was busy, but the second one was not. I donned my full-dress clothes and took her to *The Birth of a Nation*, which had just opened on Broadway. It was a great mistake, because the picture was so terrific that I never once thought of holding hands.

*The Birth of a Nation* made all motion pictures that had gone before seem as dull as Elks Club's minstrel shows. It was full of more new tricks than a magician's coat. Today the things that D. W. Griffith first introduced are as commonplace as the double take, but in those days many of his innovations were revolutionary. It must be remembered that the art of telling a story in motion pictures was hampered by minds that had been grooved to

the stage. To most directors the frame of the picture was still an imaginary proscenium arch. The story was told by the old rules of play writing. There were few camera movements or changes of camera angles to give added interest to the action; only an occasional subtitle helped break the monotony of the exaggerated pantomime. Griffith brought imagination and invention to the medium. He experimented and discovered new ways to improve the telling of a motion-picture story.

In the battle scenes of *The Birth of a Nation* he introduced the extreme long shot, intercut with medium and close shots to give a new dynamic power to his story. Intimate scenes were played in medium or close shots of a few seconds' duration, which intensified actions and reactions. His last-minute rescue in *The Birth of a Nation* became a standard pattern for action pictures. Cutting back and forth between the heroine, who was struggling to escape a fate worse than death, and the hero, who was riding to her rescue, he treated the audience to a dramatic experience that, though obvious today, was then unsurpassed for emotional impact.

At that time the camera was not mobile as it is today. Such a device as a close-up of a revolver lying on a desk, followed by a camera movement to include the hero sitting at the desk contemplating suicide, was unknown. But Griffith achieved similar effects by the use of the "iris." In a black screen a small iris opening would reveal the symbol or the key to the scene, then gradually the circle would widen to disclose the entire scene. And the same device was used in reverse.

Griffith is credited also with using the close-up to give additional punch to his scenes and the "fade" as a method of lowering the curtain at the conclusion of a sequence. And *The Birth of a Nation* was accompanied by a special orchestral score to heighten the drama of the scenes and to set the mood.

I realized that night that moving pictures could be just as important as stage plays and that movie actors no longer had to be ashamed of their profession. I went to sleep and dreamed that I

was a star and that Griffith was my director. After every scene Griffith would bow and tell me that I was magnificent. I would bow back and assure him that he was a genius. We were Alphonse and Gaston all over the place.

Next morning I was out of bed at seven; I donned my blue double-breasted broadcloth, put on a fresh collar (Arrow Apollo) and a new blue cravat with white polka dots, and hied me to the barbershop. After a shave, a haircut, and a tonic I dropped into the Natty Tailor Shop (suits pressed while you wait) for a press and a shine. Then, drunk with my own elegance, I had breakfast at the Astor. At a quarter to ten I strolled out of the Astor with only seventy-five cents left in my pocket but brimming over with aplomb and well-being.

The offices of the Equitable Pictures Corporation were on the fifth floor of the Fox Film Corporation Building at 130 West Forty-sixth Street. I presented myself to the girl at the reception desk, gave her my name, and informed her that I had an appointment with Mr. Sheer.

"Oh, yes. Mr. Sheer is expecting you. Go right in."

My ego swelled. I was no longer one of the mob of extras waiting in the yard at Vitagraph until a director pointed at me. I was now a featured player with quick access to the inner sanctum of a big picture producer. I lit a cigarette, strolled nonchalantly into Mr. Sheer's office, and greeted the gentleman with enthusiasm, at the same time retaining proper dignity and poise. But he blew my poise right out the window.

"Sorry, Menjou," he told me. "That picture has been called off. Drop around again in a couple of months."

My heart dropped right down to my toes and then bounced up into my throat. I couldn't have been more stunned if he had hit me over the head with a blackjack. If I said anything to him, I have forgotten what it was; I was too dazed to remember anything. Pretty soon I was out in the hall again and in the elevator. I couldn't go back to Father and tell him I had hocked my ring and squandered the money on a dress suit and cutaway. He

would throw it back at me for the rest of my life. A ham actor, a dead beat, a no-good!

At that moment the elevator door opened and I saw a huge mob of people milling around in the casting office of the Fox Film Company, which was on the third floor. Then the door closed and the elevator started down again. Suddenly I did a delayed reaction. They must be casting a picture at Fox! I stayed right on the elevator and rode up again—better to be an extra once more than go back to Father a failure.

As I elbowed my way into this mob of actors, I noticed that there was an assortment of whiskers and muffs in the crowd, a sure sign that they were casting a picture with a foreign background. I was reassured; this was my specialty. I twisted the ends of my mustache a bit higher and tried my best not to look like a lad from Cleveland, Ohio. I even inquired loudly in French the name of the picture. A fellow with a beard like one of the Smith brothers replied in French that it was called "A Parisian Romance." That sounded right down my alley.

At that moment a door opened and Fred (Bing) Thompson, a Fox director, appeared. He climbed on a chair and began picking his cast by pointing. I was way at the back, so I stood on tip-toes and looked over the shoulder of a big, fat bird with a goatee. Finally Thompson looked my way. "You with the mustachel" he called. "Are you a Frenchman?"

I quickly replied in French, "*Pardon, monsieur, est-ce que vous m'adrezsez?*"

"You'll do," he said; then he ordered those he had picked to report to the Union Hills Studio at nine o'clock in full dress.

I yelled, "Do you mean nine o'clock H.O.C.?"

Thompson stared at me in surprise and then grinned. H.O.C. meant "Hand on Crank"—in other words, in make-up and ready to shoot. He knew that I must be an experienced extra, and that is just what I wanted, because you never could tell when a director would pull an extra out of the mob and give him a part.

And that was exactly what happened the next day. There was

a character called Juliani in the picture who was supposed to be a great concert violinist. In casting the part somebody had hired a musician instead of an actor. He could play a fiddle all right, but as an actor he was strictly a piece of Limburger. On top of that he had a hard time understanding English. Thompson wasted half the morning trying to shoot a scene. There must have been seventy-five extras on the set getting ten dollars each, and in those days that was a terrific overhead. Finally, in desperation, Thompson yelled, "Is there an actor in this joint who can play a fiddle?"

I shot out of that crowd so fast that I skidded four feet past Thompson before I could stop.

"Can you play a fiddle, Frenchy?" he demanded.

"No," I answered, "but I can play a piano."

He gave me a resigned look. "Okay. Sit down and play."

Adjusting the stool to just the right height, I flipped back the tails of my dress coat and sat down. Then I warmed up my hands, played an arpeggio or two, *segued* into *The Merry Widow Waltz* and then *Rustle of Spring*.

"That's enough," decreed Thompson. "We'll change the part to a concert pianist."

We rehearsed the scene once and then shot it. I was shaking in my boots. But when we finished, Thompson shouted, "That's great!" Then he came over and shook my hand. What a wonderful feeling!

But as we continued shooting, I began to do some thinking. Nobody had said anything about paying me more salary. I thought to myself, "It's very nice to play an important part and have your name on the screen, but don't be a sucker, Menjou. You've got to have more dough. Glory is all very well in its place, but in this business money is what counts. Remember what your father always says about a ham sandwich: 'Slice the ham thin, call it *jambon entre pain*, then raise the price.'"

When we finished shooting for the day, the extras began lining up to get paid off for their day's work. I was tempted to get in

line, too, and draw some money for I had only fifteen cents in my pocket by this time and I was hungry. But I was afraid that, if I accepted ten dollars for my day's work, that was all I would get as long as I worked in the picture. On the other hand, if I went to Sam Kingston, the manager of the company, and asked for more, maybe I would get fired. Finally I went up to Mr. Thompson, trying to be very casual about it, and asked how long the part I was playing would last.

"About four weeks, Frenchy."

Four weeks! That was wonderful. My first important part and it was to run four weeks. For a break like that, I thought, I should gladly take no salary at all. But then my French ancestry whispered in my ear, "Adolphe, you are a jackass!" And at the same time I noticed four carpenters come on the stage and start to tear down the big ballroom set in which we had been working. It occurred to me that by morning, with the set down, it would be more expensive to rebuild it than to pay me a good salary. So I thanked Mr. Thompson and left without getting into line to collect an extra's pay.

It looked as though I would have to live on a glass of beer and a free lunch until the next day, but luckily I ran into an old college classmate on Broadway and borrowed two dollars.

Next day when I arrived at the studio, I took a quick look to be sure the ballroom set had been struck. It had. I hit Mr. Kingston at once for an advance on my salary.

"Why didn't you collect your money yesterday?" he inquired.

I explained that I was no longer an extra, that I expected to be paid a weekly salary.

"How much?"

"One hundred and fifty dollars."

Mr. Kingston screamed as though I had just asked for his right arm. He called me a robber. He threatened to black-list me. "You'll never work again!" he shouted.

I settled for \$100 a week, and worked for four weeks at that salary. Bing Thompson, the director, thought it was a good joke.

He was very encouraging and a fine man to work for. After the picture was over and long before it was released, he gave me stills of all the scenes showing me in the part of Juliani. The stills meant more to me than a letter from J. P. Morgan. Because with those under my arm I could call on all the casting directors and prove I was an actor. I was in business!

## 7: *The Crucial Test*

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**B**ACK in those days, when you applied for work, you always left a few photographs with the casting director and filled out a blank telling all about yourself. You gave your name, address, telephone number, height, weight, age, color of eyes and hair, etc. Then there was a check list of outdoor and indoor accomplishments. It went something like this:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CAN YOU DO? PLEASE CHECK.

Swim  
Dive  
Play Tennis  
Row a Boat  
Ride Horseback  
Play Ping-pong  
Drive a Car  
High-jump  
Pole-vault  
Box  
Wrestle  
Dance  
Play Golf  
Turn Handsprings

And there was always a blank space for special accomplishments such as wiggling one's ears or taming lions. An actor in search of a job always checked the whole list. He never could tell when he might get a job because he had said he could row a boat, dance, and turn handsprings.

That was how I got an important part in *The Crucial Test*. I had said I could ride horseback when actually I'd never been on



a horse in my life. But when they hired me, nobody mentioned that I would have to ride a horse. The casting director only explained the best features. He said it was a wonderful part—I was to be a Russian aristocrat, a colonel of the Czar's Hussars, aide to His Excellency the Grand Duke Boris. Naturally no actor could resist a part like that.

The producer of the picture was William Brady, Broadway entrepreneur and prize-fight manager, and the star was Kitty Gordon, a well-known Broadway actress. The scenario was written by Frances Marion, who is still a prominent screen writer.

After I had landed this prize part of the aide to Grand Duke Boris, they fixed me up with a uniform and a karakul hat and told me to report to Fort Lee for outdoor scenes. I knew it would be cold on location, so I borrowed a raccoon coat from a well-heeled friend. Everyone admired the coat so much that I wore it in all the outdoor scenes, thus lending a bizarre note, to say the least, to the general Russian atmosphere of the picture.

I should have guessed, when we were ordered to Fort Lee, that there was riding to be done, for that was where most of the western pictures were made. Tom Cameron had a stable of horses there that he rented to the various picture companies. Tom was known as "The Captain of the Fort Lee Cossacks," and any actor who got on one of his horses and stayed on for the shooting of one complete scene automatically became a member of the outfit. It didn't matter whether you lost your stirrups and had to put a full nelson on the horse in order to stay in the saddle; as long as you stayed on top you were a Cossack.

When we got to Fort Lee, John Ince, the director and a brother of Thomas Ince, one of Hollywood's greatest producers, explained the script to me; it was then that I discovered that I was supposed to actually ride a horse.

"Do I have to?" I asked. "I'm not feeling very well today."

"What's the matter?" demanded Ince. "Don't you know how to ride a horse?"

He had a look in his eye that made me think that perhaps he

had a cousin who did know how to ride a horse, so I lied glibly, "Of course I can ride a horse. I was a member of the Black Horse Troop at Culver."

I was stuck then. And when they introduced me to my horse, he immediately took a kick at me. I guessed at once that he didn't like me and I knew I didn't like him. He was one of the imitation cow ponies they used in westerns. The aide to the Grand Duke should have had a more distinguished-looking animal, but there were no distinguished-looking animals available.

Finally Cameron and a couple of other fellows helped me get on the horse and I rode over to the head of my detachment of hussars. It was wintertime and I was cold; so was the horse. He was anxious to get going and warm up. We waited around for fifteen minutes for the cameraman to get ready to shoot, and each minute the horse grew more and more restless and I grew more and more uncomfortable. The saddle on which I was sitting was made of wood, and it practically cut me in half. The picture had to be authentic so the saddle was strictly Cossack; but the horse was from Brooklyn.

Finally we got the signal to charge. We stood up in our stirrups and galloped toward the camera shouting and yelling. I was in the lead, trying to look like a man who had been born in the saddle. But suddenly a gust of wind blew a newspaper in front of the horse. He shied and tossed me right over his head into a snowbank.

Director Ince had quite a time getting me to climb back on that horse, but I finally did and we shot the scene. As I was climbing off, the horse took one more kick at me and caught me right in the place he was aiming for. That was too much. I sneaked up behind him and kicked him back in the same spot.

*The Crucial Test* turned out to be a horrible picture, but I had a good part. I could hardly wait for it to be released so that I could see the reviews. Finally the big day came. I rushed out and bought all the papers. But only one reviewer said anything about me, and he got my name wrong:

"J. Herbert Frank, in the role of the pursuing Grand Duke, gave a very forceful performance and was ably assisted by Adolph Merjou as his companion."

During this period, while I was struggling to gain recognition and better parts, the industry as a whole was also going through a period of uncertainty, trying to find a way to create entertainment by mass-production methods. For this new medium gobbled up story material with an appetite that was Gargantuan and never ending. Every producing company sought a formula that would make each new picture a sure-fire success so as to keep the public packing into the theaters.

The first great discovery of the movie industry was the horse opera or western picture. The first western hero was G. M. Anderson, known to millions of fans as "Bronco Billy." He was a smart businessman as well as an actor and was the first producer to realize that horse operas could be turned out like Ford automobiles, with standard parts and plots.

The next mass-production discovery of the movie makers was the serial picture. About 1913 it became an important part of every movie program and kept the fans coming back each week to see how the heroine would escape the latest deviltry of the villain. *The Adventures of Kathlyn*, starring Kathlyn Williams, kept movie-goers in a state of breathless suspense for weeks. More of the same quickly followed.

The famous *Perils of Pauline*, with Pearl White, inspired a pair of tin-pan-alley tunesmiths to write a popular song about poor Pauline and her hair-raising escapes from death. Then came *The Million Dollar Mystery*, most successful of all "cliff-hangers," as they are called in the trade. This one ran as a weekly newspaper serial in the *Chicago Tribune* at the same time that it was being shown in the theaters. A \$10,000 prize was offered for the solution to the mystery, and no real movie fan would miss a single episode. James Cruze was the leading man; he later became one of Hollywood's top directors.

Although the larger motion-picture theaters no longer exhibit serials, they are still an important staple in thousands of smaller theaters, and two producing companies are still grinding them out.

My first and only experience in a serial was one called *The Scarlet Runner*, starring Earle Williams and Edith Storey. I played the part of an Italian *marchese*, which was a new nationality for me and a slight elevation in rank. A *marchese* is one grade below a prince, but this must have been a very unimportant marchese, because I only appeared in one two-reel episode.

*The Scarlet Runner* was not much of a serial, but the episode in which I performed was something of an innovation, since a Cadillac automobile received more footage than Mr. Williams, the star. This Cadillac was loaned to the Vitagraph Studios with the understanding that it would appear prominently in the picture. It was a big limousine, brand new, with a chauffeur supplied free of charge. The Cadillac emblem was not only emblazoned on the radiator, but also on both sides of the car and the rear. My old friend Wally Van directed the picture and he took good care to see that the Cadillac company got its money's worth. That Cadillac was somewhere in the background of every shot.

But Vitagraph got its money's worth, too. The locale of the picture was supposed to be the Italian Alps, so we went to the Delaware Water Gap to shoot all the exteriors, and the Cadillac transported the whole company, including three actors, the director, the cameraman, and the camera.

We spent only three days shooting that two-reel episode—two days on location and one back at the studio in Brooklyn. There was no time wasted on serials. They had to be produced quickly and cheaply. We had one rehearsal for a scene and one take. Cut! They used to say that the only time they ever did a second take in a serial was when an actor broke his leg and had to be shot.

Although serials were, for a while, the answer to the producer's prayers, the greatest discovery of the movie moguls was

that Shakespeare had erred when he said, "The play's the thing." For, after the novelty of movies wore off, it was the stars that the fans came to see and not the plays. This simplified the whole plan of movie manufacturing. The producers at first had tried to keep the identities of their stars secret, but now they did an about-face and began to exploit the stars in preference to the product. If that was what brought the money to the box office, they were willing to ride with the tide.

The producers not only publicized the recognized stars, but also spent thousands of dollars creating stars out of unknown talent. The Essanay Company, in search of a new male star, landed the winner of a "Most Handsome Man" contest staged for them by *The Ladies World Magazine*. The prize man was Francis X. Bushman, who set feminine hearts aflutter like a combination of Frankie Sinatra and Errol Flynn. He was costarred with Beverly Bayne, and when their marriage was announced, a million female hearts were broken.

This publicizing of stars created competition for their services. Naturally their salaries skyrocketed. When Adolph Zukor announced that he had signed Mary Pickford to a new contract that called for the staggering salary of \$2,000 a week, it started a panic. Everybody wanted to be in pictures. Stage stars suddenly realized that, although their art might suffer in the "flickers," it would not suffer on an empty stomach. At the Lambs Club it was no longer a disgrace to be caught working in a moving picture.

But we journeymen movie actors got no part of the golden bonanza that was poured into the laps of the name actors from the stage. Although I had had one taste of affluence in *A Parisian Romance*, it was a long time before I ever again earned a salary of \$100 a week. I'd work one day as an extra at five dollars, the next as a bit player at ten dollars, and occasionally I'd land a "big" part at seventy-five a week for a week and three days.

I worked in two-reelers and four-reelers, good ones and bad ones. My method for judging the good ones was infallible. They

were the pictures in which I received mention from reviewers. When such a rarity occurred, the review was reverently clipped from the paper and pasted in my scrapbook.

I was not partial; as long as my name was mentioned I got out my shears. There was a review of *The Amazons* that infuriated me, but I clipped it anyway. The star of this picture was Marguerite Clark, who was second only to Mary Pickford in popularity. Since I had the part of Count De Grival, which was right down my alley, I was expecting great things from the critics. But the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* brushed me off with nine words: "A Cleveland man, Adolph Anjou, plays the insouciant Frenchman." My own home town, and it didn't even spell my name right!

But shortly after this my scrapbook received a real gem to which a full page was allotted, for the critic had gone completely overboard. There it was in black and white: "Lottie Pickford plays the part of the society wife and Adolphe Menjou was particularly good as the heavy."

Despite the number of pictures in which I had played, Father had never seen me in one. I had enticed Mother to Manhattan to see a couple, but Father refused to go to a motion picture of any kind. I think he avoided them for fear he might accidentally see one in which I appeared; but he always insisted that he was too busy to go to movies. After prolonged persuasion, however, and some nagging by Mother, he finally promised to go to a movie with us. I borrowed a car for the occasion, drove to Long Island, and brought them back to Manhattan.

The picture we saw was high-society stuff, four reels, with lots of people in it. There was a big masked ball as well as stock shots of the Champs Élysées and an English race track. Naturally I thought I had a good part in the picture; otherwise I would never have taken Mother and Father to see it. But unfortunately I had had no opportunity to see the picture, so I was rather disappointed when I discovered that my first scene, in which I was dis-

covered wearing an elegant dressing gown and getting shaved by my valet, had been cut. At that point Father leaned over and asked when I would appear.

"Very soon now," I assured him.

A reel went by and no Menjou. Again Father leaned over and inquired when he would see his son in this nonsensical drama. At that very moment I appeared, dancing with the heroine but wearing a mask.

"There I am!" I hissed.

But by the time Father turned back to the screen, I had whirled the young lady into a crowd of other dancers, and he was never sure whether he saw me or not. That was the last time I appeared in the picture. My part had been scissored out and was on the cutting-room floor.

I tried to explain this to Father, but he was irreconcilable. As we left the theater, he attracted considerable attention by denouncing the acting business and motion pictures in particular. Fortunately he was speaking in French. The gist of his remarks was that I had to get out of a business that could eliminate me so easily; I must get into something stable—a solid, substantial business with a future.

"But Father," I protested. "This is exactly that kind of business. Didn't you notice all the people in that audience? They paid good money to see that picture."

"I counted them all," he answered in French. "And there were more people on the screen than there were in the audience. If you run a restaurant that way, you go broke!"

## 8: *Montague or Capulet*

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**G**ETTING cut out of a picture is always a movie actor's nightmare. It is something over which he has no control. That man with the big scissors in the cutting room is ruthless. In the early days of pictures we would think up all sorts of dodges to stay on the celluloid. The first films were always full of faces mugging over the hero's shoulder. Even when we were just part of a mob, we extras would try to put on such outstanding performances that the cutter would notice and hold those shears. This was especially true if the picture was an important one with top stars.

I remember in 1916 I was chosen for a ten-dollar-a-day extra part in a picture with Francis X. Bushman and Beverly Bayne. They were two of the biggest stars in the business, and the picture was a feature-length version of *Romeo and Juliet*. I was just one of the poor relations that joined in the fight over Juliet's yen for Romeo. But I figured that, even though I was an extra, I could give the part much subtle characterization and maybe attract the director's attention so that he would keep me working in the background.

"What am I in this scene," I yelled to him, "a Montague or a Capulet?"

He tossed a disgusted look my way and shouted back, "What the hell do you care? When I say 'action,' you just start fighting!"

A couple of weeks later I landed in a juicy plum of a picture through my friend Bing Thompson. It was one of the early Famous Players pictures entitled *Nearly a King*. The part was little



more than a walk-on—just a fellow in a cutaway who was supposed to stand around and look like an ambassador or something. But it was a part with John Barrymore, and that was something I could talk about when I went looking for other jobs.

On the first day of shooting, when Barrymore came onto the set, he saw me standing there with my profile turned toward the camera. "Who is that fellow?" he demanded. "I don't like his face."

"Why?" asked Thompson.

"Don't give me any of your silly persiflage," replied Jack. "He looks too much like me. He will confuse the plot."

There was nothing Thompson could do about it. He came over to me and told me that he was sorry but he would not be able to use me in the picture. My disappointment probably showed in my face. I not only needed the work, but was losing the opportunity of playing with a big star.

As I walked off the set, Barrymore stopped me, then leaned over and muttered in my ear, "Go upstairs and put a full beard on that kisser of yours."

So I played in the Barrymore picture for three days in a beard that made me look like a cartoonist's idea of an anarchist.

In 1916 we extras and bit players began to speculate on all the picture making out in Hollywood, but nobody believed that anything important could be happening way out there. After all, the only place to find actors was on Broadway, and no self-respecting actor would be caught any farther from Broadway than the Union Hills Studios in New Jersey, which was considered a distant hinterland, tolerated only because of the peculiarities of motion-picture making.

A few big stars like Pickford and Fairbanks and Chaplin journeyed to Hollywood because the producers tempted them with fantastic salaries; but we were sure that their hearts were really on Broadway and that eventually they would return from the sticks and force the movie companies to follow them back to the rightful center of moviedom. When Doug Fairbanks, after mak-

ing only one picture in California, returned to New York to complete his contract, we all nodded sagely, then dashed for the Triangle Studios to get jobs.

There were four of us who used to pal around together at that time. We had much in common, for all of us were college men with fathers who disapproved of our ambitions to be movie stars. My roommate was Ned Hay, Jr., from Washington, D.C., whose father was a past grand exalted ruler of the Elks. Then there was John Bennett, a Yale man, whose father owned the Gotham Hotel, and Dudley Hill, who is now a dignified banker.

We organized ourselves into a sort of movie team under the name of "The Gentlemen Riders." This label quickly identified us to casting directors not so much as horsemen but as society types. As a matter of fact the other three were all very capable in the saddle; I couldn't ride, but I could look the part in a rented riding habit. We all showed to best advantage in dress clothes, sport jackets, riding habits, or cutaways.

One director who always called for "The Gentlemen Riders" when he was casting a picture that needed society types was Allan Dwan. It was through Allan that we landed Doug Fairbanks' second picture, *The Habit of Happiness*, which was shot in two studios that the Triangle Company had just taken over, one in Yonkers and the other in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Both of these studios were of the latest type; they were constructed somewhat on the order of greenhouses, large portions of the walls and roofs being of glass, so that on sunny days it was unnecessary to use artificial light.

Fairbanks played the part of a fellow who believed that laughter was the cure for all of man's ills, both mental and physical. He was the "laugh doctor." One sequence called for him to go down to a flophouse in the Bowery, where he gathered the failures and the misfits together, taught them to laugh, and thus inspired them with new hope and new determination.

Dwan decided that, rather than hire actors to pretend that they were Bowery bums, it would be simpler to go to the Bowery

and hire the real thing. One morning he drove down to the Bowery with a big bus and four policemen. They went into a flophouse, rounded up every man in the place, and ordered them all into the bus. At first these Bowery characters thought they were being pinched and they set up a terrible yammer protesting their innocence. But when they learned that they were to get five dollars for acting in a movie, they went along peaceably.

The whole crowd was ferried across the river and delivered to Fort Lee, where a duplicate of the Bowery flophouse had been built. But about that time most of them began to develop severe cases of the shakes. Director Dwan, realizing that they needed a nerve tonic, sent his assistant for a couple of quarts of whisky. The man came back with bottled-in-bond bourbon. But the Bowery boys viewed the whisky with critical eyes. There was no balm in liquor like that; what they wanted was something with a belt to it. So the good stuff was sent back and exchanged for Old Pick-handle—a headache with every slug.

After that the Bowery actors were ready to perform. Then a more serious problem arose. The scene Dwan was to shoot called for Doug to come bouncing into this flophouse, wake up the inmates, and give them an inspirational speech full of merry quips and cute sayings. But the derelicts from the Bowery were not easily amused. Laughter was something to which they were not accustomed. No matter how much of a pep talk Dwan gave them or how hard Doug worked, they couldn't seem to give out with any hearty laughter.

Finally, in desperation, Doug told them a new off-color joke. For the first time the huns were amused. They gave out with hearty guffaws.

"Keep going," Dwan directed, and he signaled Vic Flemming, the cameraman, to start grinding.

Doug kept making the jokes bluer and bluer. The flophouse gang bellowed louder and louder. Between shots the other actors and the crew racked their brains for more off-color gags. Then, with the camera set for a new shot, Doug continued his suppos-

edly inspirational, cheer-up-and-chuckle speech by giving out with more sizzlers.

Finally the sequence was shot and the Bowery bums were delivered back to their favorite saloon, each with a five-dollar bill clutched in his hand. A few weeks later the picture was finished and released. Immediately letters of protest began to pour into the Triangle offices from deaf people, societies of deaf mutes, and various reform organizations. Anybody who understood lip reading knew that Doug was not making the sort of cute cracks to those hooze fighters that the subtitles indicated. The company had to recall all the prints of the picture and get a lip reader to help edit out the ribaldry.

At the time we were working in the Fairbanks picture Ned Hay and I lived at 102 West Forty-fourth Street, just a few doors from the Lambs Club, in a room that cost us six dollars and fifty cents a week. When work was over for the day, we would dash for home, put on our best clothes, don our spats, take our walking sticks, and sally forth to wait in front of the Lambs Club for Dudley and Johnny. Then, after chatting for a few moments before the Lambs in order to give passing pedestrians the impression that we were prosperous members, we would stroll down Forty-fourth Street to the Claridge bar.

This was the gathering place for the masculine celebrities of Broadway. Any night we were likely to see William and Dustin Farnum, Lowell Sherman, Willard Mack, Arnold Daly, Caruso, Willie Collier, and many others. John Barrymore was almost as familiar a face in Claridge's bar as the bartender.

We four would step up to the brass rail and order a round of beers. One of us, with a gesture of largess, would pay for the first round. When that one was consumed, the next man would say, "Another round of beers, bartender."

Sometimes there would be a friendly argument as to who would pay.

"This one's on me."

"No, no. This is my treat."

"I insist."

But this was a lot of salami, because we all watched very carefully to see that each bought a round in turn. After the second beer we would drift casually over to the free-lunch counter, our mouths watering, for the Claridge set the best free lunch in Times Square. There were juicy cold cuts of beef, pork, and ham. A thick slice of one of these roasts between crusty rye bread was an entree fit for a king. There were also fat sliced sausages, hard-boiled eggs, delicious dill pickles, crisp potato chips, radishes, spring onions, a bowl of potato salad the size of a kettledrum, and creamy cottage cheese. We would stoke up to the limit, then go back to the bar for another round of beers.

Sometimes a tippler in an expansive mood—a Barrymore or a Lowell Sherman—would drop in and generously offer to buy us drinks, knowing that we bit players were always on the bare edge of solvency. In that case we would order Pineapple Bronxes, which were Claridge specialties. This was an expensive drink—fifteen cents. It was a tall concoction made with gin and other potent fluids into which one or two slices of pineapple were stuck. After two Pineapple Bronxes men have been known to stand on their heads and recite "Gunga Din."

Following our free lunch at the Claridge we would move on to the Knickerbocker bar for more beer and a free lunch of corned beef, which was the specialty of the house. Our next stop was likely to be Redpath's bar on Broadway, where the sugar-cured ham melted in our mouths and the beer was only a nickel. By this time we had dined sumptuously for the price of six or eight beers.

There were times, though, when even ten-cent beers at the Claridge were more than we could afford. In that case Ned and I usually went to a Hungarian restaurant that was right across the street from our room on Forty-fourth Street or to a Chinese restaurant next door. At either place the meal was fifteen cents. The Chinese restaurant served excellent Yakomein and the Hungarian restaurant gave us goulash with *spaetzel*.

On the other hand, if we were feeling flush and wanted to dine in style, we went to Pete Anselmo's café at Forty-ninth Street and Seventh Avenue. Here we could get a five-course table-d'hôte dinner, including wine, for sixty-five cents—and if we were quick on the getaway, no tip.

In those days there were no agents for bit players, so every man was on his own. It was dog eat dog. We had to get acquainted with the casting directors and rustle our own jobs. We would always try to call every studio about five o'clock in the evening and learn what would be shooting the next day. If they were casting a ballroom scene, we would show up in evening attire. If it were a street scene, we would wear street clothes. But sometimes we would discover that the picture was one in which we had already worked, in which case the director would pass us by because he didn't want the same faces to show on the screen again. This was always a sad blow, because it meant a day wasted and no pay.

But there was one fellow who used to fool the directors regularly, so that sometimes he would appear as an extra three or four times in one picture. His name was Lillybridge and he had formerly been a protean or quick-change artist in vaudeville. Lilly always carried several disguises in his pockets—like a comedy detective. When a director would shake his head and say, "Sorry, we used you yesterday in this picture," Lilly would duck into the crowd of extras and show up a moment later wearing a goatee and thick tortoise-shell spectacles. Next day he would do the same thing by switching to a mustache and pince-nez. He also showed his wife how to make her dinner dresses so that by undoing a couple of snaps they became décolleté and she was in an evening gown. Between them they must have accumulated a steady \$100 a week, which in those days was big money.

At this stage of my career one of my main problems was clothes. I always tried to save up a few dollars to add to my wardrobe, for that was one way to get the best jobs. Whenever I saw

a sale of shirts or ties or suits advertised in the paper, I would rush out to take advantage of it. One day some store advertised a sale of suits—all well-known brands—at half price. I arrived at the store before the doors opened. After careful consideration I selected a very snappy green flannel with a pin stripe—a perfect fit. The price was fifteen dollars.

Next day I wore my handsome green flannel to work in a picture with Olive Thomas. But on the way to the studio I got caught in the rain. It poured and I had no raincoat or umbrella with me. By the time I reached the studio my beautiful green suit had shrunk till I looked like a close-clipped French poodle. That was the last time I ever bought a suit for fifteen dollars.

But it wasn't long after that when I stopped worrying about pin stripes and double-breasted coats and bargain neckties. I got a suit free of charge—from Uncle Sam.

## 9: *The Case of the Waltzing Mice*

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**I** WAS playing “another villainous role” in *The Moth*, starring Norma Talmadge and Eugene O’Brien, when the United States declared war on Germany. Before the picture was finished I heard that Cornell University was forming an ambulance unit that would leave for France within a month. According to all the dope the ambulance boys were to get there even ahead of the marines. That was for me. I enlisted, packed my dress suit, my cutaway, my spats, my stick, my cloth-top shoes, and four fancy waistcoats in moth balls and entrained for Camp Crane, Allentown, Pennsylvania. Thirteen months later I was still there. What liars those recruiting officers were!

Camp Crane was the center of army confusion. For weeks we had no uniforms, no ambulances, no discipline. Each one of us had one suit, one pair of shoes, and no change of underwear. We got squads-right and squads-left but we didn’t feel the least bit like soldiers. After three weeks of drilling I had to put cardboard in my shoes to keep from walking on the ground.

One month after our arrival at Camp Crane each of us was finally issued one shirt (flannel), one pair of breeches (olive drab), one pair of leggings (lace), and one pair of shoes (large). I put on this outfit, took one look at myself, and almost deserted.

But I didn’t wear my GI clothes very long. Somebody discovered that I had been to Culver for a year, which was more military training than anybody else in camp had had except the commanding officer, so they made me a lieutenant.

That was fine, but I still wanted to get overseas. Instead they put me to work directing a camp show called *Goodbye Bill*. I was



full of a patriotic urge to fight for my country and for France, but the Army shoved me back in show business!

We opened at Reading, Pennsylvania, played a couple of weeks on the road, then moved into the Forty-eighth Street Theater in New York. The show was a big success so I was promoted to a captain.

I was still waiting for orders to sail in the fall of 1917 when my father fell seriously ill and was taken to the hospital for an operation from which he never recovered. When I reached the hospital in New York he hadn't long to live. Only Mother was with him, for at that time Henry was in China working for the Standard Oil Company of New York. Father was too weak to talk, but he looked at me in my tailor-made uniform and my silver bars and smiled approvingly. He always admired good-looking clothes, and I think I had as fine a fitting uniform with as highly polished puttees as any West Point captain. If he had spoken, I think he would have praised God that I had stopped making faces for a living.

It was not until May 6, 1918, that my outfit finally received orders to sail. To my complete disgust I discovered that we were going to Italy and not to France. I could converse in French like a Frenchman; but the Army sent me to Italy, so I had to buy an Italian grammar and learn a new language.

We landed in Genoa and were given a magnificent reception by the Italians. They cheered us and threw rose petals at us. It was wonderful, but it was a long way from the front. After three months I could talk Italian, but I decided that I would never hear the sound of shot and shell.

During those three months of waiting and pulling wires to get to France I began to suffer from severe attacks of indigestion. Since I was in the Ambulance Corps and in contact with many doctors, I had them look me over, individually and collectively. None of them could find out what was wrong. I was to learn a good many years later, and after considerable suffering, that I had one of the finest ulcers in captivity.

But my ulcer pains disappeared on the same day that my request for service in France was granted. I was put in charge of the outfit in which I had originally served as a private, and we all went to France the hard way—over the Alps in trucks.

That was a very tough assignment because about half of my men had been my pals when I was Private Menjou. They called me by my first name and occasionally by other names less complimentary. I finally stood up in front of them and announced that I didn't care what they called me in private but for the sake of military discipline it would be essential to address me publicly as Captain Menjou—after all, we were part of the Army.

But discipline and military rank were taken very lightly in the Ambulance Corps; my men called me "Captain" only as a formality; most of the time they called me "Ad" as my Cornell classmates had. When they got week-end leaves, however, they always invited me to go along with them—an honor accorded very few captains. I have always suspected, though, that I was invited only because I could talk to the waiters and the mademoiselles in French, thus saving much time and trouble.

One of the first things I had to do when I took charge of my gang was to teach the two boys who were the company cooks how to prepare food. They would have made better plumbers than cooks. The only thing they could do around a stove was open a can of baked beans.

I first taught them how to make *pot-au-feu* the way it had always been prepared at home. We started with a brisket of beef with garlic stuck into it. Then we tied the meat firmly with a piece of cotton string so that it would not fall apart in cooking. With this we put every sort of vegetable we happened to have on hand, as well as chicken legs, necks, and wings, and then added seasoning and spice and allowed it all to simmer over a slow fire for about four hours. When we finished we had an entire meal in one pot—soup, meat, vegetables. Delicious!

Once the boys had tasted *pot-au-feu*, they demanded more French dishes. I taught those two army cooks to prepare *selle d'agneau français*, *poule au riz*, *poule au vin*, and many other

French dishes. Finally it got to the point where every dish they served had to have a French name. We had what they called hamburger *à la portugaise* and hot dogs *à la florentine*. They also called spuds *pommes de terre* and a dish of stewed prunes *compote de prunes*.

It was fifteen months from the time we enlisted when finally we got to the front—and in fifteen days I had all I wanted. We were moved into the St. Mihiel drive, and when that was over, we were shot right into the Meuse-Argonne offensive. We had finally heard the shot and the shell—and those shells I didn't care for. Whenever an artillery attack started and a big one came over with a roar like a subway train, I could be heard a mile away ordering everybody to duck for the *abri*, which is French for shelter. Then the race would start. I was the smallest, but I always got there first. Maybe the others were just being polite because I was the captain, but I doubt it. After St. Mihiel and the Argonne they had a new nickname for me. They called me "Abri-Ad." Some captains got to be called "Old Iron Jaw" or "Poison Ivy" or "Hard Nose," but I was only "Abri-Ad." Obviously I commanded the utmost respect from my men at all times.

It was June, 1919, before we got back to the States and were demobilized. I had decided while I was in the Army that Father had been right and that the future of an actor was too precarious for me. Besides, I found that New York was no longer the center of the motion-picture business. During the war a great part of the industry had moved to Hollywood.

So I looked around for a job and finally found one in the steamship business. That seemed like an honest, substantial, and dignified industry, and it probably is. The only trouble was that I picked the wrong steamship company. The outfit for which I worked got involved in a senatorial investigation for some sort of monkey business about buying government ships too cheaply. All of a sudden there was no company and I had no job.

I sat down then and had a good heart-to-heart talk with my-

self. That is, half of me sat down while the other half paced the floor and made dramatic gestures.

"What now?" I asked myself. "Am I going back to Vitagraph and beg for a job as an actor?"

"No, Adolphel" I replied firmly.

"But I love acting. I have it in my blood."

"Poppycock! Do you want to end up a bum like your father prophesied?"

"If I get to be a star I can make a lot of money."

"A star! Ha! With that kisser?"

"Can I help it if I haven't got a face like Wally Reid? Anyway I'm particularly good as a heavy. My clippings said so."

"Only *one* clipping said so."

"But what other experience have I had?"

"You have been a commanding officer—a leader of men."

"Um—well—yes."

"You can be a director—a producer—owner of your own motion-picture company! That's the way to get rich."

"I'd rather be a rich actor."

"A ham at heart! No vision! No ambition! Pull yourself together, man. Throw out your chest; hold up your chin. You are going to be a picture tycoon!"

So I went out and got a job with A. J. Van Buren as production manager. The title was more important than the job. My salary was forty dollars a week, for which I ran Mr. Van Buren's motion-picture business. He was also in the advertising business and owned a couple of skating rinks.

He had a deal with the *Literary Digest* to clip its joke column, "The Spice of Life," and reproduce the jokes on the screen. I used to help clip the jokes and assemble them into a two-minute reel. Van Buren also had a contract with Paramount to deliver one-reel comedies in which Ernest Truex was the star. On this operation I was casting director, cashier, grip, prop man, cutter, and efficiency expert. Every few weeks I would start to demand a salary boost. But Mr. Van Buren was very much against salary

boosts. He always headed off my request by awarding me a bonus of a nice, new, shiny five-dollar gold piece. Gold has always dazzled me. It took me a long time to realize that, as Menjou the efficiency expert, I was accepting a bribe not to insist on more salary for Menjou the casting director, cashier, grip, prop man, and cutter.

The second picture I did with Truex gave me a new experience with animals. How I hate to work with them! If they don't kick or bite you, they will steal your scenes.

In this picture John Harvey, the director, had dreamed up what he thought was a very funny sight gag. He explained it this way: "The character that Truex is playing has brought home a piece of Limburger cheese." (They used to think that Limburger cheese was a very funny prop.) "Truex's girl comes into the scene so Truex slips the cheese into his pants pocket. Then he starts to make love to the girl. But at that moment a mouse comes out of a hole in the wall, smells the Limburger cheese, and runs up Truex's trouser leg. Then come the belly laughs, with Truex trying to get rid of the mouse and his girl thinking he has gone crazy."

Now it is hard enough to make movies with tame animals, let alone try to shoot movies with a mouse in the cast. I figured that the production expenses would go up and I would get blamed, so I advertised for a slightly trained mouse. I didn't need a mouse that could do back flips or stand on its head; I only wanted a mouse that would run up a fake leg smeared with cheese. Finally a youngster answered the ad. He had ten little orphan mice that he had raised from babies, so I hired him and his mice and told him to bring them to the studio the next day. But on the way home that afternoon in the subway the mice got loose and almost caused a riot.

I racked my brain trying to think where I could get some nice tame mice. That's the kind of problem a prop man faces. Finally I phoned the Bronx Zoo to find out what they knew about trained mice. I talked with Dr. Raymond Ditmars, the head man. After

listening to my sad story, he told me to come out to the zoo and he would lend me four Australian waltzing mice. He explained that they were very tame and would probably be good actors to boot.

But next day, when I got the four waltzing mice to the studio, I discovered that my troubles had just started. In the first place, the mice were the wrong color, so I had to dye them. What a job that was—trying to get each mouse to hold still while I changed its complexion. I'd rather whitewash an elephant. When finally the paint job was completed, we set up the camera and got ready to shoot. We put one mouse in a box behind the hole in the wall; on the other side of the wall we had a dummy leg, which we rubbed with cheese to attract the mouse. When we opened the door in the box, the mouse was supposed to come through the hole, look around, sniff the aroma of cheese, and run up the dummy leg. He came out of the hole all right, but instead of sniffing the cheese he began waltzing around like crazy. We tried it again. The mouse pouted and wouldn't come out of the hole. We poked sticks at him to make him come out, but all he would do was waltz. After that we tried the other three mice, but they were just as bad. Just to shoot a few feet of film showing a mouse coming out of a hole and running up a dummy leg we had to go through four days of the most frightful, monumental labor I have ever endured. It was even worse than pitching hay.

But finally we got the scene shot. It was too late to take the mice back to the zoo, so I put them in a shoe box and took them home with me. I was living with my mother in a little apartment in Brooklyn. That night I decided to leave the lid of the shoe box slightly ajar so that those valuable Australian waltzing mice would have plenty of air. Next morning the box was empty!

I was panic stricken. Those valuable mice were gone. What could I say to Dr. Ditmars? But Mother was very calm about it. "Sure and why should they run away?" she asked. "Is there anything wrong with our apartment? Maybe they are just looking for something to eat."

She put a plate of cheese on the floor and pretty soon the miss-

ing mice came waltzing out from under the stove. I shooed them into the shoe box and rushed them back to the Bronx Zoo.

"Dr. Ditmars," I said as I returned the mice, "I will never be the same man again in a ballroom. I have learned to detest waltzing."

It wasn't long after that when I decided I had had enough of slapstick comedies, *Literary Digest* jokes, and Mr. Van Buren. Charley Burr, a friend of mine, was planning to make a moving picture, but he knew very little about production. He had a scenario, some actors, a director, and a partner who claimed to have money, but he had no one to do the hard work. I convinced Charley that I knew all about picture making and he gave me a job as supervisor and unit manager. For all that responsibility I demanded and got a salary of \$100 a week. But if I had been paid twice that amount, it wouldn't have been half enough for the grief I went through on that picture. My job eventually combined the duties of wet nurse, chief mourner, holder of the crying towel, head liar, and whipping boy. It was a mess!

The name of the picture was *The Silent Barrier*. The barrier was supposed to be the Swiss Alps, but the biggest barrier was a stack of unpaid bills. We went up to Lake Placid to shoot Alpine snow scenes. William Worthington was the director and the cast included several unknown actors and a real Swiss mountaineer.

We had rooms at the Lake Placid Club and were looking forward to a pleasant winter vacation. On the first day of shooting there was a glorious snowstorm. We made beautiful long shots of the mountaineers wending their way over the mountainsides. Worthington was delighted. "What magnificent shots," he kept telling me. "This picture is going to be sensationall!"

There was no time to make any medium or close shots that first day, so we planned to shoot those later. But it never snowed again the whole time we were up there. All of the medium and close shots had to be made with a crew of men tossing confetti in the actors' faces.

Then came Saturday—payday—but the money that was supposed to come from New York failed to arrive. I told everybody

that there must have been a delay in the mails, but not to worry because their checks would surely arrive on Monday.

Monday arrived, but no pay checks. When the checks failed to appear on Tuesday, the actors and the crew began to get restless and a little suspicious.

"Don't worry," I assured them. "Everything will be all right. Besides, you are having a wonderful vacation with all expenses paid, so relax and enjoy yourselves."

They did just that—all of them but me. They began running up big bills at the club and then the manager began asking me pertinent questions about who was guaranteeing the payment of those bills. It took two weeks for the money to arrive. By that time I was a nervous wreck.

Meanwhile I had other problems. We had to have a very special kind of Swiss chalet. This chalet was supposed to hang out over a mountain lake, so that when the villain fell off the front porch, he would crash through the ice of the lake below and drown. I almost froze to death scouring the mountains looking for this special chalet or any reasonable facsimile. There was none to be had. So finally we rewrote the script and had the heavy slip on a glacier and disappear into an ice crevasse 9,000 feet deep.

On top of this and other little problems the technical adviser and one of the women in the cast began holding hands. He kept telling her, "That director is an idiot. He is ruining your career. This is the way you should play the next scene."

Then this girl would get into an argument with the director, and the technical expert would join in, and there would be a row and no shooting for the rest of the day.

How my ulcer suffered on that picture! I had an assistant who followed me around with bicarbonate of soda in one hand and aspirin in the other. By the time we got back to New York I was cured of wanting to be a big executive in the picture business. I just wanted to be an actor with a precarious future and plenty of time to enjoy it. I had made up my mind to go to Hollywood and try my luck.



## 10: *The Faith Healer*

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**I** DIDN'T go to Hollywood alone; I took with me a brand new wife. When a man starts to explain how he happened to get married, he spouts off some very amazing talk. The reasons he gives are fantastic. But the real reason is usually the same—it was spring, he happened to have two dollars for a license, and there was a beautiful girl daring him to even hint at the idea.

Having saved some of my salary while I was in the Army, I had a little more than two dollars at the time I was married. I had, in fact, about \$1,000, a fair wardrobe, and two tickets to Los Angeles. My wife and I had decided to be practical and spend our honeymoon in California. While there, I would try to break into pictures in Hollywood.

On our way to the coast we stopped to visit my wife's relatives. Mistake number one. Her home was in the bluegrass country of Kentucky. Her father owned the general store in a town of 1,500 population. That was a metropolis! Everybody thought that when we spoke of the big city we were referring to Lexington. They were steeped in the traditions and lore of thoroughbred horses and good whisky. That's all they talked about—horses and the merits of whisky as an aid to good health. And when they said "whisky," they meant bourbon. The first night we arrived somebody suggested that we have a drink.

"Fine," I said. "Make mine Scotch and soda."

"What is Scotch?" I was asked.

I explained that it was whisky that was made in Scotland.

That did it—they knew at once that I was a Philistine. It seems that in Kentucky nothing is recognized as being whisky that is not labeled "bourbon."

My next mistake came when I was invited to go horseback riding. I declined as politely as I could, explaining that, while I was very fond of dogs, I wanted no part of a horse and that horses felt the same way about me. After that I was strictly *persona non grata*.

Next day I decided to take a walk and see the town. I dressed in proper attire—including spats—took my walking stick, and started out. In five minutes every kid in town was following me. None of them had ever seen spats and a walking stick before. There I was, trying to make a good impression in my wife's home town, and all I got was the Kentucky buzz, which is about the same and just as humiliating as a Bronx cheer.

I returned from my walk an embittered man, and I may have made a slightly deprecatory remark about the Bluegrass State. My bride became indignant, and I made the fatal mistake of debating the cultural tastes of the South with a Southerner.

Up until the time I arrived in Hollywood I had an idea that it consisted of a village square with picture studios on all four sides, the whole works surrounded by orange groves. I discovered, instead, that Hollywood was a very loose term. Sometimes it meant a vague area in the outskirts of Los Angeles, the center of which was Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue, where the Hollywood Hotel was located; but sometimes it referred to the moving-picture business, which seemed to be scattered all over southern California.

I was also surprised to find that Hollywood Boulevard was not a busy metropolitan street but a small-town thoroughfare bounded by orange and lemon groves as well as by business blocks. Pedestrians didn't have to look both ways to cross the street, and drivers parked their cars anywhere along the boulevard without danger of smashing fenders or locking bumpers.

But the most surprising feature of Hollywood was that the movie makers had turned the streets of the town into a background for their pictures and the residents into willing actors.

The fire department turned out to aid in filming fire scenes and the police department cooperated in the making of crime pictures. On a Sunday it was no surprise to see a bank holdup on Hollywood Boulevard in a real bank borrowed for the occasion by some picture company. Passing pedestrians stopped to watch famous stars perform, and if a few more extras were needed, they were recruited from the curbstone audience.

When it was necessary to shoot an automobile accident, the police obligingly roped off the street, the fire department hosed down the pavement, and some reckless stunt man came careening down the street and piled up against a telephone pole. Meanwhile the cameras ground and the native residents stared in openmouthed admiration of the stunt man's daring.

Often it was unnecessary to hire more than a handful of extras in order to stage a street scene that today would take 200 members of the Screen Extras Guild. Parades, lynching mobs, and columns of soldiers might appear on Hollywood streets without warning, preceded by a truck on which a grinding camera was mounted. The citizenry would line the curbs or join the mobs just to get into the picture. In every drugstore and restaurant near the studios bathing beauties, cowboys, silk-hatted heavies, and heroes in sport shirts, all in make-up, were a common sight. And there were no autograph hunters then and only a few curious tourists.

Private homes and ranches were borrowed, free of charge, to shoot exterior scenes. Or, if no one was home, the movies companies simply "stole" the location for their background. Parks and public buildings were at the service of the picture companies, too.

Sometimes Hollywood's early residents were dumfounded and shocked by the antics of the movie crowd, but the real-estate salesmen and the merchants were delighted by the prosperity that movie money had thrust upon them.

At the time I arrived in California very few of the so-called movie colony lived in Hollywood. Most of the actors, directors, writers, and other creative workers lived closer to the center of

Los Angeles. Hollywood, as a place to live, was still considered rather rural, and horse operas were actually being filmed in the outskirts of Beverly Hills.

My wife and I found a small apartment on Parkview Street, which sounded like a classy address but was strictly third rate. We lived in an old frame house that had been converted into small furnished apartments. By this time we had only \$900 and my wardrobe. I wasn't sure that I could get a job in Hollywood, but I was determined to economize and stay as long as our money held out, for California had obviously become the best place to pursue a picture career.

About three o'clock one morning during the first week we were in town there was an earthquake. I'm a very light sleeper, so as soon as the bed began to shake I was sitting up, wide awake. The whole building was shaking. For a minute I thought a truck had run off the street and into the house. But things kept right on shaking. Doors rattled; windows rattled; suddenly I realized it was an earthquake. My wife and I jumped out of bed, found our dressing robes, and ran out into the street. Things finally quieted down and we went back to bed, but I couldn't sleep a wink that night wondering whether that was going to be a typical evening in California.

As soon as we were settled I began figuring out the best way to find a job. I knew several actors whose advice I could ask but no directors or producers or people who had jobs to offer. We went to call on Fatty Arbuckle, whom I had known in New York before World War I. He was living on West Adams Street in one of those magnificent rococo mansions of that period. The place looked as big as Grand Central Station, and Arbuckle was throwing a lavish party. We met Buster Keaton, Joe Schenck, Ford Sterling, the chief of the Keystone Cops, Mack Sennett, Mabel Normand, and many others. Somebody asked me to a poker game a couple of nights later to which several directors had been invited.

"What kind of a poker game?" I inquired.

"Oh, the usual thing. Table stakes."

I knew I couldn't afford to play in a table stakes game—or any other kind, for that matter—but it was important for me to meet directors, so I went. There were three or four directors there, among them Al Green and Frank Lloyd, also Nat Deverich, who used to be John Stahl's assistant, and Teddy Butcher, production manager at Metro-Goldwyn.

What a poker game that was! Every pot opened for five dollars. There were dollar chips in the game, too, but nobody ever used them except to make one of those Texas bets like "I raise twenty-one dollars just to make it more confusing." The game was full of banter and repartee, but I was sweating blood. Every time I got into a pot for five dollars, somebody said, "I'll raise it fifty just to keep the pikers out." And I was the only piker in the joint. By the time the game was over I had lost \$300 just in antes and openers. I think I only stayed in one pot, and that was when I had aces back to back and caught another ace. Everybody knew I was loaded and folded fast.

When we started to settle up, I didn't have enough money to pay my losses because my wife had most of our money at home with her. Nat Deverich was the banker, so I suggested that he walk by my place on his way home and I would get the cash to pay him off. I hoped he would wait until the next day, but he didn't. He came right along with me to collect!

Looking back on those first few months, I still get cold shivers. Strong athletic legs were the prime requisite in obtaining a job in those days; I was sorry I hadn't gone out for track at Cornell. I used to start out every morning and make the rounds on foot—first to the old Paramount lot at Selma and Vine, then down to First National a mile or two away, then over to the California Studios where Fairbanks used to shoot his pictures, and finally back to the Fox lot at Western and Sunset. By that time I was exhausted.

When I went to Metro, it was half a day's ride on the street car, and the trip to Universal City was just as bad. There were

some smaller studios out near Silver Lake that I only got to once in a blue moon. Those were strictly sleeper jumps.

Arbuckle was wonderful to me. Some days he would let me use his big Pierce Arrow to make the rounds. I would drive up to the studios looking very grand and putting on the dog as though I were used to that sort of thing. But nobody was fooled because everybody recognized Arbuckle's car. It was a special-body job only slightly smaller than a light cruiser.

One day I got a call from Sol Wurtzel at Fox. I rushed over there in a taxicab. He offered me a contract at \$150 a week. I would have snapped at the offer but I thought maybe I ought to discuss it with Arbuckle, so I asked for one day to consider the proposition.

As soon as I got out of the Fox Studio, I hurried over to see Arbuckle at Paramount. When he heard about the offer, he hit the ceiling.

"It's an insult!" he shouted. "I won't permit you to become a wage slave! These producers are trying to grind the actors under their heels. The least I will allow you to work for is five hundred dollars a week!"

That was easy for him to say because he was getting about \$4,000. But I took his advice and stayed away from Wurtzel, waiting for him to call me and raise the offer.

He never called. May, June, July went by and my money was running out. There was always a job just around the corner, but somehow it never materialized. Finally my pocketbook was so limp that I didn't even have train fare back to New York. I was panic stricken. I took stock and figured that in about four days I would have to pawn my watch or my diamond ring, or maybe both.

Then came my first Hollywood break. Mabel Normand, whom I had met at Arbuckle's house, was preparing to shoot a picture at Metro, and the part of a fast-talking newspaper reporter hadn't been cast yet. She wanted to cast this part "out of the groove" instead of using the usual type. Somehow she recalled me and

suggested my name. I was certainly offtype casting—so far off that nobody else wanted me. Practically all I had ever played up to that time had been suave cads, sneering dukes, or skulking meanies. But since Mabel was Metro's biggest star, she usually got what she wanted.

Cliff Robertson, the casting director, called me and asked me to see Victor Schertzinger, the director, at his home that night at six-thirty. I was shaking in my boots when I called on Vic because this job meant so much to me. After I had showed him some of my stills, he asked me what my salary was.

"Five hundred dollars," I told him, obeying Arbuckle's instructions.

"This part is only worth three-fifty," he replied. "I'm afraid—"

I stopped him right there and told him I'd take it. I was through trying to hold out for \$500. Besides \$350 a week was more money than I had ever earned in my life.

Next morning I reported to the studio for my first acting job since 1917—three years. I was scared stiff because it had been so long since I had been in front of a camera. And I know I was lousy in the part. But Mabel Normand was one of the sweetest people who ever lived. She asked to have me in her next picture, which followed immediately. On the strength of these two pictures I went to Paramount to work in a picture that turned out to be a very big hit. It was *The Faith Healer*, adapted from William Vaughn Moody's play.

I was walking on clouds. The part seemed a very good one for me, because it was right down the old groove again. I was a heavy whom everyone heartily hated. The star was Milton Sills. He was the faith healer and I was the doctor who sneered at his methods of healing people and called him a fake. George Melford, the director, thought I was just right for the part, but I may have overplayed it a bit. After all, those army doctors had given us a very rough time in the Ambulance Corps and the experience had probably left deep scars in my memory. But the treatment they had given me was nothing compared to the kicking around

I got from New York's picture critics. The worst of the lot was Alan Dale in the *New York American*. When I finished reading his review I felt like one of the Cherry sisters.

This is what he said about me:

. . . And the heavy was one of those smirking villains that have gone out of fashion. The vogue for gentlemen who look the villain part has passed. We demand that our nefarious ones shall not have their nefariousness written on their coat sleeves or on their mustaches. In such a picture such a villain was absurd. Otherwise the cast was excellent. . . .

For three days I was haunted by that review. I even contemplated shaving off my mustache! I was afraid to go out and look for another job. I could picture those casting directors tossing that review right in my face. "What a ham I am," I told myself. "Where did I ever get the idea that I was an actor?" And then, on the third day, the telephone rang and it was First National Pictures calling. Sidney Franklin wanted me for a new picture, and the part was to have fourth billing.

"I saw you in *The Faith Healer*," he told me, "and I thought you gave a fine performance."

Since that time I have always been a great admirer of Mr. Franklin.



## 11: *The Three Musketeers*

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**D**URING my first two or three years in Hollywood I saw almost every picture that was released. Having had little stage training and no theatrical background, I suffered from a feeling of inadequacy; I kept studying the methods and tricks of all the directors and stars in an effort to improve my own technique.

It was a period when motion pictures were beginning to make great strides in storytelling, photography, and direction; at the same time actors were learning to subdue their exaggerated gestures and facial contortions. By painful degrees the movies were acquiring a certain amount of refinement and good taste.

A number of memorable pictures were produced at that time. D. W. Griffith made an exciting melodrama called *Broken Blossoms*, with Richard Barthelmess and Lillian Gish. Lon Chaney was very effective in *The Miracle Man*. From Germany came *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, full of startling innovations. Doug Fairbanks produced one of his best pictures, *The Mark of Zorro*. Fox made the first movie version of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Richard Barthelmess gave a fine characterization in *Tolable David*, probably his best picture. And Charlie Chaplin finished his first full-length picture, *The Kid*, which made a star of Jackie Coogan.

Those were the days when a strange new thing was happening to actors. They were becoming millionaires. Those who didn't own their own companies drew fantastic salaries and paid their income taxes out of petty cash. Uncle Sam took less than 1 per cent out of the first \$20,000; and an actor who made \$5,000 a

week only paid about 3 per cent in taxes. No wonder the big names of Hollywood could live like Indian potentates.

Unless a person earned \$1,000 a week he was a mendicant. If he didn't have a swimming pool, three saddle horses, four servants, and an Isotta-Franchini town car, he was just a peasant. I considered myself one of the underprivileged because in my first year in Hollywood I earned only \$6,500. That was more money than I'd ever made before in my life, but it was less than a week's salary for some actors.

About that time the poker game in which I had lost \$300 began to pay dividends and it soon turned out to be the best investment I ever made. My first job in 1921 came from Al Green, one of the winners in that game. He told me he didn't think much of my poker playing but liked the aplomb with which I lost, so he suggested my name for the heavy in a picture he was about to direct for Mary Pickford.

A Mary Pickford picture was always a plum for any actor, because it was sure to ring the bell at the box office and so give its actors added prestige with the casting directors. Mary had her own company at United Artists, and when I say it was her company, I mean she ran the show. Everything had to pass her personal inspection, including, of course, the actors.

I was very worried at my interview with Mary. I told her that I had once worked with her husband, Doug Fairbanks, and I tried to appear unconcerned and at ease; but I wanted that job very badly and she knew it. I got the part finally, but I had to take a \$50 salary cut. I walked out of the office talking to myself. "How," I thought, "can that little girl be so sharp in business matters?" But she was only a little girl on the screen; the rest of the time she was a keen student of the dollar.

When I met Mary, she had been a picture star for twelve years and was the highest-paid actress of all time. She began her career doing child parts on the stage, and in 1909 she sought a job in pictures. It is said (probably the pipe dream of a press agent) that she spent her last nickel for carfare from her New

York boardinghouse on Thirty-seventh Street to the Biograph Studios on Fourteenth Street. According to the story, she had just been turned away by a receptionist in the outer office when D. W. Griffith sauntered by and was struck by Mary's childlike beauty. In any event, she went to work at Biograph for five dollars a day. In her second picture Griffith made her a leading woman. She was sixteen years old. Within a year she was one of the favorites of nickelodeon fans and was lured from Biograph to Carl Laemmle's IMP Company by a salary of \$175 a week and the added incentive of star billing.

At IMP her leading man was Owen Moore, who became her first husband. They spent their honeymoon making pictures in Cuba, where they went to escape the process servers of the motion-picture trust. Shortly after that she received the first \$1,000-a-week salary in movies. Then her salary increased by geometrical leaps to \$2,000, then \$4,000, and it finally reached \$500,000 a year. After that she formed an independent producing unit at First National and shared in the profits of her pictures. Shortly before I arrived in Hollywood, Mary, Doug Fairbanks, and Charlie Chaplin had formed their own producing and distributing company called United Artists.

The picture for which Mary hired me was called *Through the Back Door*, and I played the part of a suave but unsavory blackmailer. Jack Pickford, Mary's brother, shared the directing job with Al Green. I believe this was the first picture in which Jack had a hand in the direction. Up to that time he had been a juvenile star. Later he directed many of his own pictures.

Jack was completely different from his sister. He had a great antipathy for hard work and had no idea whatever of the value of money. While he was making \$2,500 a week, he was spending \$3,000. He threw elaborate parties, gave expensive presents to people he liked, bought a new automobile every few months, had enough clothes for three men, and was continually falling in love. His greatest passion was dogs; he always had three or four.



*The Faith Healer*, Paramount, 1920, I had my first important role in Hollywood as a cynical doctor who sneered at Milton Sills throughout the picture. The critics thought my villainy was too obvious, but none of them noticed that the baby's head was plaster of Paris.



part of Louis XIII in *The Three Musketeers*, 1921, helped my career tremendously, for the picture was one of Douglas Fairbanks's best. The musketeers in the background are Leon Barry (Athos), Eugene Pallette (Aramis), and George Seigman (Porthos).

Nothing but the finest would do; they had pedigrees a yard long—more breeding than all the royal families of Europe.

A short time before we started this picture, Jack had purchased a magnificent German police dog. Its forebears all the way back to the time of Frederick the Great had been champions. It was a beautiful animal—and very intelligent. As soon as he had bought him, Jack had sent the dog to school. This was no ordinary dog-training school; it was a sort of Harvard University for smart puppies. The entrance requirements were very high; unless a dog had an IQ of 155, he couldn't get into this dog school. It was guaranteed that the dog would understand three languages by the time he got out and would practically speak two of them.

Every few days Jack would go over to this Canine College and have a long talk with this dog to find out if he needed any pocket money and how he was getting along with his doctor-of-dogs degree. Finally the day of graduation arrived and Jack was busting with pride because his dog was valedictorian of the class. Next day he brought the dog to the studio. We were working in a huge drawing-room set, supposedly in the home of a millionaire for whom Mary was toiling as a kitchen slavey. No shooting could proceed until Jack had shown us what an educated dog he owned.

Jack snapped his fingers and said, "Play dead." The dog played dead. "Roll over." The dog did it. In fact the dog did everything I have ever seen a dog do. He walked on his hind legs, jumped through hoops, and turned somersaults. He even did problems in mathematics.

"How much is two plus two?"

The dog barked four times.

"I love that dog," Jack declared. "I wouldn't sell him for a million dollars!"

He claimed that the dog understood every word he said. "What is it a horse pulls?" he asked the dog. The dog wagged

his tail. "You see!" he exclaimed. "He talks with his tail. The answer is waggin'."

There was no doubt about it; that was the most educated dog that any of us had ever seen. There was only one thing in his schooling that had been neglected at that college. He had not been housebroken. All of a sudden, before everybody on the stage, this beautiful supereducated dog ruined a big Oriental rug worth thousands of dollars. The rug didn't belong to the studio; it had been rented for the picture; so Jack had to buy it.

"Get that mut out of here!" he yelled. "Sell him, give him away. I never want to see him again!"

That was the last we ever saw of the dog with the college education.

The Mary Pickford picture had hardly been finished when a call came from Nat Deverich, who had nicked me for part of that \$300 in the poker game. He was an assistant to John Stahl, and they wanted me for a small part in a picture at Metro starring Lewis Stone and Claire Windsor. I put my salary back to \$350.

John Stahl was a very fine director, but somehow we could not see eye to eye. The very first day of shooting we had an argument about how the part should be played, but the argument didn't last very long.

"Get me another actor!" shouted Mr. Stahl.

They got another actor but they couldn't fire me because I had a contract for a week's work; so I was turned into an extra and was supposed to stand around and look sophisticated. Some actors would have been insulted by this and would have walked out of the picture. But it was hard to insult me in those days for \$350. I hid behind other actors and looked out the window when the camera was grinding so that I wouldn't be noticed on the screen. It was a tough week, but I got back more than the \$300 I had lost in the poker game, and when my own mother went to see the picture, she never knew that I was in it.

My experience with Mr. Stahl was something of a blow to my

pride, but I recovered my self-esteem very quickly when Doug Fairbanks called me to United Artists to be interviewed for a part in *The Three Musketeers*. I had played bit parts in two Fairbanks pictures in New York—*The Habit of Happiness* and *Manhattan Madness*—so I thought perhaps he had remembered me and had called me to play one of the musketeers. But it turned out that he wanted me for the part of Louis XIII. I said to Fairbanks, "This is the end of my career. I've played everything from a marquis to an earl. Now I am a king and I can't go any higher."

It was Edward Knoblock, the playwright, who had suggested me for the part of the king. He had been writing the screen adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* at the time *The Faith Healer* was released. When he saw me in that picture, he thought I resembled the engravings and paintings he had seen of Louis XIII. That is the sort of break that often means success or failure in Hollywood, for the part of Louis XIII was an important steppingstone in my career.

Working in a Fairbanks picture was quite an experience. In some ways it was like going to a Hollywood masquerade party instead of to work. The set was always crowded with visiting celebrities and Doug's friends. Between shots Doug was likely to feel the need of a physical workout, so he would hold an impromptu gymkhana with some of his athletic buddies.

One time the late Prince George, a younger brother of King George VI, came to Hollywood incognito, but everybody in town knew he was there. Fairbanks invited him to the studio to show him how pictures were made. To make it look more interesting he sent a hurry call to Gower Gulch for all the professional cowboys available and staged a rodeo for the Prince. Then to give him an additional thrill Doug took him on one of the sets and performed a series of athletic stunts climaxed by a mighty leap through a fake window made of sugar. The Prince thought it was real glass until Doug reappeared chewing a piece of the window.

Doug was very fond of practical jokes. He had what we called a shuddering chair. If some unwary person sat in it, Doug would



press an electric button that set the chair vibrating until its occupant's teeth rattled like a pair of castanets.

In his dressing room Doug had a rubbing table where a masseur used to give him and other members of his company daily massages. During the making of *Robin Hood* Doug had this table wired so that he could give anybody who got on it a terrific shock. The control button that applied the juice to the table was under the arm of a barber chair where Doug used to relax while the make-up man was preparing him for the screen. He would watch in a mirror on the wall until some victim got nicely comfortable on the table and then would turn on the juice until the fellow yelled for mercy.

My first day on *The Three Musketeers* started off with some horseshay typical of a Fairbanks picture. We were shooting a very serious scene near the end of the picture, in which the Cardinal expected to reveal the Queen's duplicity to the King. Everything went along nicely until suddenly Mary MacLaren, who was playing the part of the Queen, let out a most unqueenly yelp and slapped at her neck. The scene was ruined and Fred Niblo, the director, stopped the camera.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Something stung me," answered Miss MacLaren.

We started the scene again, and the beautiful queen let out another yip and slapped at her neck. We looked around for some sort of stinging insect but couldn't find any. As we began the scene for the third time, something suddenly stung me. But this time we discovered the cause, for a tiny pellet of lead fell at my feet. Then we heard howls of laughter coming from the rafters overhead. Jack Pickford had come on the set and had concealed himself on a catwalk where he was indulging in one of his favorite tricks—shooting bird shot from between his teeth.

During this picture most of the cast took fencing lessons, because the instruction was free and one never knew when he might have to do a fencing scene in some picture. I remember how carefully the instructor schooled Doug in every fencing

scene he was to do, so that it was technically perfect. But when these scenes were actually shot, Doug went completely unorthodox. He was all over the set, jumping over chairs and on top of tables, slashing away with his rapier as though it were a broadsword. The fencing instructor, who was an expert swordsman, tore his hair. Never in his life had he seen such an exhibition. He screamed and protested, but Doug did it his way. When the picture was released, fencing experts all over the world groaned at Doug's antics, but there were millions of movie-goers who thought he was the world's greatest swordsman.

Doug held court every day either in the gymnasium or on the athletic field while he went through a workout. He jumped, vaulted, turned handsprings, wrestled, boxed, did stunts on the parallel and horizontal bars, and then played strenuous games. He even invented a very rough game called Doug Ball, a combination of volleyball, football, and mayhem.

One of the regulars on the Fairbanks lot was an Italian former wrestler called Bull Montana. He was a huge fellow, built like a Sherman tank, with enough muscles for three men. By prearrangement, Montana used to stooge for Doug whenever visitors came on the lot. He would come up to Doug and start an argument in broken English. The argument would grow in fury until finally Montana would make a rush at Doug, whereupon, with a twist of the wrist, Doug would toss him over his shoulder and the big wrestler would land sprawling on the ground. Then he would plead, "Please don'ta hurt me, Meester Fairbank." Probably Montana could have broken Doug in half, but he loved to play straight man for the boss.

Doug worked just as hard as he played, and he expected his company to do the same. I remember how surprised I was one day when he said to me, "You're going to be a success in this business because you take it seriously. I notice you're always on the set fifteen minutes early."

In spite of all the horseplay and the practical jokes and the social activity on the Fairbanks lot, Doug invariably got the very

best performances out of his actors. I think that was because they were relaxed and having a good time. And the spirit of fun that prevailed at the studio always seemed to show up in Doug's pictures. There was a tongue-in-cheek, devil-may-care sort of quality in all his films that nobody else has ever been able to duplicate. As a general rule, I have noticed that the best pictures are made under pleasant and congenial conditions. Whenever there is a lot of fuss and turmoil in making a picture, it usually turns out to be a "turkey."

Doug was always a little jealous of his own special accomplishments. No one in his pictures could ever outshine him in athletic prowess, agility, or derring-do. That was natural—he was the star. Dick Rosson, who was one of Doug's assistant directors, told me about the time he tried to get one of his friends a part in *Robin Hood*. This friend was Lefty Flynn, a big handsome fellow over 6 feet tall who had been an athlete at Yale and was married to Viola Dana, one of the leading stars of that day. They were casting the part of Little John, and Lefty felt that he was a good type for the part. Dick, wishing to help him out, gave very explicit and definite instructions on how to behave when he went to see Doug.

"If he is going through his daily workout and invites you to join him," Rosson instructed, "play along but don't do your best. Always let Doug win. Show him that you are a good athlete but not too good."

Lefty was very anxious to get the part. He wanted to make good. But as the hour for his appointment drew close, he became more and more nervous. So, just to steady his nerves, he took a couple of slugs of gin, then a couple more. When he arrived at the studio, he was on top of the world. Sure enough, Doug was playing softball with some of the gang and he invited Lefty to join them. When Lefty came to bat, he forgot all about Rosson's admonitions, knocked the ball over the fence, and broke up the game. Doug slapped him on the back and told him he was great. So Lefty decided that Rosson had been completely wrong.

Then they started high-jumping. Doug jumped 5 feet 6 inches, but Lefty cleared 5 feet 7 inches. Doug grinned and slapped him on the back. Lefty thought he was making a big hit. When they tried broad-jumping, Lefty beat Doug by 2 feet. He beat him at pole-vaulting, at shot-putting, at everything, and Doug kept giving him his famous grin and telling him what a wonderful athlete he was. But next day Doug cast Alan Hale in the part of Little John.

## 12: *The Sheik*

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**F**OLLOWING *The Three Musketeers* came another lucky break for me. I was cast in the part of the French doctor in *The Sheik*, starring Rudolph Valentino.

Before World War I Valentino had been a casual acquaintance of mine in New York. We had met at the Claridge bar in the midst of a free lunch. He was a professional ballroom dancer and later he went to Hollywood to try to break into pictures. We met again on Hollywood Boulevard while he was making *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, and he told me about his good fortune in being cast opposite Alice Terry in this big Metro picture. I never guessed how great he would be on the screen. Not until I saw the picture was I convinced that Valentino was a star. He was not only a star, he was a sensation.

Only a few days after seeing the picture I heard rumors that Metro had decided not to take up its option on Valentino. I couldn't believe it, but it was true. It gave up the greatest romantic star that motion pictures ever had.

Rex Ingram, director of *The Four Horsemen*, convinced Richard Rowland, president of Metro, that Valentino was just a flash in the pan, that he was impossible to direct, and that he would never be successful in anything else. This, at least, was what Valentino told me. As a result, despite the tremendous success of *The Four Horsemen*, the star of the picture found himself out of a job and \$4,000 in debt. It could only happen in Hollywood.

But in the meantime Paramount had prepared a screen version of Edith Hull's very successful novel, *The Sheik*. James Kirkwood was slated to play the leading role in the picture, but some

sort of a salary argument developed. Kirkwood wanted \$1,750 a week; Paramount was unwilling to pay it. They hunted around for another actor and finally hired Valentino for \$750.

This was the movie in which I learned that no matter how frail and ethereal a girl may look, when an actor starts to pick her up in his arms to carry her, she is just so much flesh and bones and heavy as hell. Agnes Ayres was the star opposite Valentino. In one scene she was supposed to faint during a sandstorm and I, the sheik's Parisian friend, was supposed to pick her up and carry her to her tent. I weighed about 125 pounds, and Agnes weighed almost the same. In the first rehearsal I attacked the scene with great confidence. I went down on one knee, grabbed her, and started to lift. It was like lifting the side of a building. I fell right on my face.

George Melford, the director, said, "No, no, Adolphe, you are doing it all wrong. You must apply the principle of leverage." So he turned to another actor and told him to show me how. This fellow was 6 feet 2 inches tall and was built like a fullback. He puffed and grunted and finally got her off the ground; then he walked off with his knees buckling so badly that he looked like Leon Errol.

So I tried it again. "Do or Die" was my motto. I finally made it and staggered off with her in my arms.

"Fine," said Melford. "Now let's do it just once more."

Six times we did it "just once more." The last time I told myself it was the end. If I had to lift her again, I would either drop dead or become a misogynist. But Melford must have seen the look of desperation in my eyes. He said, "That's enough. Print the first take."

While we were shooting this picture, Valentino kept worrying about the money he owed and about his chances for success in the part he was playing. His Paramount contract was for one picture only, but it included the usual option for a long-term deal. He was sure that the option would not be exercised. I assured him that it would; anybody with an ounce of brains would

know, when his rushes were shown, that he was a potential gold mine. But he was still worried because of his experience at Metro. And for a time it looked as though he had cause to be. We were almost finished with the picture and nobody at Paramount had even hinted that he liked Valentino.

Finally I suggested to him that, if Paramount dropped him, I would like an option on him for thirty days. He thought I was joking, but I was very serious. I told him that, if I could find a suitable story, I knew I could raise enough money to make a picture. So he finally gave me a thirty-day option on his services. I had visions of owning the hottest star Hollywood had ever seen. But Paramount finally exercised its option, and I was left with nothing but a piece of paper.

*The Sheik* was a bombshell. It proved that the sensation Valentino had created in *The Four Horsemen* was no fluke. He was what the female fans had been waiting for. In six months he was an international riot—the most colossal, fantastic character the moving-picture world had ever known.

I was still working in *The Sheik* when Sol Wurtzel called me to do a western at Fox. Although my last three pictures had been with three of the outstanding stars in the business, I could not afford to be choosy. Even if I had to ride a horse and wear a ten-gallon hat, my motto was "Keep Working."

So after *The Sheik* I played in my first and only western picture, with Buck Jones. The title was *The Fast Mail*. There has never been such a jinx picture as that one. First the leading woman was injured in a powder explosion. Then, in a big fire scene, Buck Jones was severely burned when a prop man grabbed a pail of gasoline, thinking it was water, and threw it on the fire.

I was a slinky heavy in the picture, but the scenario writer must have written the part for the "Iron Man." I had to get socked by Jones and knocked through a window. Then I was supposed to have a fight with him on top of a moving train and get knocked off. At that I balked, so they had to get a double for the stunt.

The picture was full of minor catastrophes and physical violence—auto wrecks, train wrecks, falls from trains, jumps from bridges, and long chases on horseback. The assistant director was William Wellman, known then as "Wild Bill." I think it was he who thought up most of the suicidal action in *The Fast Mail*. My double and I were both cripples by the time the picture was over. That was an action picture to end all action pictures, and it very nearly finished off the entire cast.

The poker game paid off once more that year when Frank Lloyd called me for a good part in *The Eternal Flame*, which was the movie title for Balzac's *The Duchess de Langeais*. That made eight pictures for the year with hardly a week's layoff. My scrapbook was growing fat with good reviews. I had a wardrobe too big for one closet, and I also had a bank account. The only mark of success I lacked was an automobile.

I might have gone out and bought a Ford or a Chevrolet or a Buick; but those cars weren't big enough. I thought that unless I had a car half a block long, I would be considered just a vagrant. As I have already mentioned, Fatty Arbuckle had a Pierce Arrow built to order. Valentino, being an Italian, had to have an Italian car, so early in his career he bought a secondhand Fiat as ornate as a gondola. Later, when he was flush with success, he bought an \$18,000 Isotta Franchini. It was so long that in a light fog he couldn't see the radiator cap from the front seat. Chaplin had a Locomobile that could have held twelve people without crowding. When he sat alone in the back seat, he looked like Tom Thumb in an oversize bathtub.

If an actor really wanted to show his contempt for money, he bought a Rolls-Royce roadster. There were two other favorite cars in Hollywood—the Cunningham and the MacFarlan. These cars never came with bodies. The buyer just got the chassis; then he hired an architect and had a special body built around it. In the rest of the United States Cunninghams and MacFarlans were usually used for hearses, but in Hollywood they were sport touring cars with built-in bars and kitchenettes.



So naturally I had to have a big car. I bought a secondhand Cadillac that had become too small for some Metro executive, but it was still big enough for me. It had a special body, of course, and many fancy gadgets. The main feature of the car was the burglar alarm under the front seat.

One day I parked my car on Hollywood Boulevard, and when I came back I forgot all about the burglar alarm. I climbed in and the alarm went off. It made a racket that could easily have turned a man's hair white. I almost jumped through the windshield. Then I got so excited that I couldn't find the key that stopped the alarm bell. By the time I got the thing switched off, a huge crowd had collected and cops were converging on me from every direction.

But that was not the only thing that was wrong with the car. It took a fortune to run it. Every cough of the engine consumed a gallon of gasoline, and once a week I would have to take it to a garage for an overhaul job. I must have paid the overhead for the Cadillac service shop in Hollywood. Whenever I drove in, the boss would declare a half holiday for himself and go out to play golf. That car was a minor catastrophe. I finally turned it in on a new car of slightly more democratic proportions.

## 13: *Just an Old Meanie*

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SUCCESS is a funny thing; it's like a woman buying shoes. If size four is flattering to her feet, she'll try on a three and one-half and finally buy a size three. I had once thought that, if I could ever earn \$100 a week every week, that would be all the money I'd ever need in life. But when I found myself making \$350, I discovered that even that wasn't enough. That patrician Cadillac was partly to blame; with my income, I couldn't support it in the manner to which it had been accustomed. I had three alternatives—to trade in my car, to trade in my wife, or to earn more money. Eventually I did all three, but for the time being I concentrated on getting more wampum.

That is one of Hollywood's most fascinating games—black-jacking the studios into disgorging your share of their fabulous profits. For several months I was stumped because I couldn't get the right kind of parts. I was given roles that were either spinach purée or crushed raspberry sundae. Somebody else was getting all the meat—and the gravy, too.

My third year in Hollywood started off with a little cantata called *Arabian Love*, noteworthy only because it was John Gilbert's first starring vehicle. It was one of the cycle of desert sagas that resulted from the success of *The Sheik*. Gilbert had been everything from a dress extra to a juvenile and had even tried directing before he was finally signed by William Fox as a leading man. Later Fox let him go, which was a serious mistake because Jack became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's most popular male star.

Following the Gilbert picture I did four charades at Para-

mount. The best of these was *Clarence*, directed by William De Mille and adapted from the Booth Tarkington stage success in which Alfred Lunt made his first New York appearance as a leading man. In this picture we had four of the most prominent stars of the old days—Wallace Reid, Agnes Ayres, May McAvoy, and Kathlyn Williams. Wally Reid was just approaching the end of a very spectacular career. He had started as a bit player with Universal about the time I was working as an extra in New York and had arrived as a star in Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. From this he had gone on to become one of the most popular and talented leading men in pictures.

Wally was a sick man during the shooting of the picture. Between scenes he would go to his dressing room and lie down for a nap or he would fall asleep in his chair. When it came time for him to go to work, it was always difficult to wake him up. He looked very tired and very ill, but when he stepped in front of the camera, he could always turn on the charm that had made him famous.

I learned during the picture that in trying to deaden a painful affliction from which he suffered he had become a drug addict. But he was an excellent actor and very considerate of those with whom he worked. I remember one instance when we had a scene together in which we were supposed to have a fist fight and I was to get knocked down. We had to do several takes of this scene and Wally, who was much larger than I, kept worrying about socking me too hard, although I'm sure that in his physical condition he couldn't have hurt a fly. It was one of the last pictures Wally Reid ever made. A few months later he went to a hospital in an attempt to cure himself, and there he died.

During my first few years in Hollywood I was seldom cast as anything but the villain—the no-good in the opera. I was such a deep-dyed scoundrel that the kids in the audience would start hissing as soon as I appeared on the screen—even before they knew the plot. They recognized me as a heel, a low-down, unscrupulous despoiler of women and a wrecker of homes. I was the kind of heavy

who sneered at old ladies, kicked dogs, and slapped little children. I was so mean that most of the time the scenarists killed me in the last reel just to make the audience happy. Sometimes, if they wanted to make the audience *very* happy, they would shoot me in the second reel. In any case, if possible, they always bumped me off. They had to. Little children and even hardened criminals would have lost faith in all human precepts of heavenly justice if I had remained alive to continue my dastardly activities.

Obviously any actor who was so thoroughly hated by his fellow men could never hope to rise above \$350 a week. The public wouldn't stand for it, and the producers didn't care. If I were ever to land in those big brackets, people had to love me or at least sympathize with my weakness of character. Even my fellow actors began to feel sorry for me. Ernest Torrence advised me to stop acting and become a director.

"They have got you grooved for a second-rate heavy," he said. "You are a dead duck. The public will not pay money even to see you get killed in a very painful manner. You are just a necessary evil, and there is no money in being a necessary evil."

I was very discouraged. I went around with my chin on my belt buckle. I decided that I was a failure—thirty-two years old, earning a miserable \$15,000 a year, and no future. I was so despondent that it was rumored I was thinking of retiring to a monastery.

Then came the day I was called for a part in *Rupert of Heutzau*. On the way to the studio I made up my mind that if this was a part in which I had to be killed in order to please people I would turn it down. I had already heard rumors about this picture. It was to be produced by Lewis Selznick under the personal supervision of Myron Selznick, at that time just out of knee pants. They had hired a cast that sounded like the guest list at the Motion Picture Ball. The big names included Elaine Hammerstein, Bert Lytell, Lew Cody, Claire Windsor, Bryant Washburn, Marjorie Daw (later Mrs. Selznick), Irving Cummings, Hobart Bosworth, Elmo Lincoln, Nigel de Brulier, and Gertrude Astor.

"What kind of a part do you want me for?" I asked Myron. "Does the audience stand up and cheer when I get killed? If so, you are talking to the wrong actor."

"This part is different," Myron assured me. "We want you because you wear clothes better than anybody in Hollywood. We are going to put you in a uniform covered with twenty-two pounds of gold braid."

"That sounds like a very wealthy character," I replied. "I couldn't feel a part like that for less than five hundred dollars a week."

Mr. Selznick was very disappointed in me. He pointed out that this was to be a star-studded cast—an epic that would live in the history of the drama for 1,000 years. For the opportunity of playing in such a picture I really should take a cut. But I told him that I was not in very good health, and that if I had to carry twenty-two pounds of gold braid around as well as act, I would have to have added compensation.

After that I went home to await his decision. While I waited, I wore a circular path in the living-room carpet. Finally I gave up hope of getting the part, sat down at the piano, and began to play mournful music. Then suddenly the telephone rang and it was Selznick's secretary telling me to report for work on Monday.

Every time an actor gets a raise in salary, Hollywood immediately has more respect for him and prints his name in larger letters on the credit titles preceding the pictures in which he appears. That is a sure way to tell who is getting the most money. The movie-going public sometimes gets the idea that the names in big print are the people with the most talent, but that is a completely erroneous assumption. The big type is for the ones who are getting the big dough. I remember a picture in which the names of the stars, the producer, and the director were in such large type that the studio very nearly had to increase the width of the film; but the name of William Shakespeare, who happened to be the author was almost omitted! Shakespeare didn't get paid, so naturally everybody forgot about him.



Edward Knoblock, who wrote the screen adaptation of *The Three Musketeers*, suggested me for the part because he thought I resembled an old engraving of the French monarch.



*The Sheik*, 1921, was the picture that made Rudolph Valentino the number one screen hero of his day. I played the part of the sheik's Parisian friend and confidant.

When Paramount discovered that I was now getting \$500 a week, the producers immediately realized that I must be a better actor than they had supposed, so I was called for a part in *Bella Donna*, a superspecial picture in which it was preparing to launch its latest star, Pola Negri. Pola had scored a hit in *Passion*, a German film, and had immediately been imported to improve the blood stream of American movies. She was so full of temperament that she kept Paramount Studio in a constant state of jitters for five years. The number, intensity, and high social status of her amours set a record even for Hollywood. During the short span of her American picture career the columnists included among her many fiancés such notables as Charles Chaplin, Rudolph Valentino, John Gilbert, Ricardo Cortez, and the Mdivani brothers.

Pola may have been responsible for the popularity of what Hollywood calls "the fighting romance"—a love story in which boy and girl meet, immediately detest each other, fight bitterly for eight reels, and then suddenly end up in each other's arms. Pola's battles with her boy friends were some of the most spectacular ever waged. In one historic clash of temperaments between Pola and Chaplin, Pola climaxed the stormy scene by fainting gracefully on a bearskin rug. While others rushed for water to resuscitate her, Chaplin refused to be outdone and fainted dramatically at her side. Pola was so infuriated that she immediately broke off their engagement.

*Bella Donna* was adapted from the famous Robert Hichens novel and had a so-called all-star cast including Conway Tearle, Conrad Nagel, Claude King, and Lois Wilson. During the shooting Pola insisted that no one who was not connected with the picture be allowed on the set. This was a privilege extended only to topflight stars, and Pola meant everyone to understand that she was as big as any American star. But one day the famous Ring Lardner visited the studio and was allowed to go on the stage despite the "no visitors" sign. When Pola saw this stranger, she glared at him and pointed an accusing finger.



"Who ees that funny-looking man?" she demanded. "R-r-re-moving him or I weel not go on weeth thees picture!"

The director rushed forward to calm her and whispered, "Quiet, Pola. That's Ring Lardner."

"Who ees thees Rink Lordner?"

"A very important author."

"So?" She rolled her eyes seductively toward Ring and murmured, "Introdooce me, plizz. I weel eenspire heem to write a beautiful sonnet."

If Ring Lardner ever wrote a sonnet, I've never heard about it.

## 14: *A Woman of Paris*

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**W**HILE we were shooting *Bella Donna*, I began to hear rumors that Charlie Chaplin was going to make a picture in which he would not appear—a serious picture. At first nobody believed the rumors, but finally there was a definite announcement that the picture would be called *Public Opinion* and that it was to be a starring vehicle for Edna Purviance, who had been Charlie's leading woman in many of his comedies. Later the title was changed to *A Woman of Paris*, but in France it retained the title *L'Opinion Publique*.

When Chaplin decided to make *A Woman of Paris*, he was thirty-four years old and at the height of his career. For four years he had made one picture a year, each the product of months of mental travail in creating the story and planning the gags and more strenuous months of actual shooting. There had been *The Kid*, in which he had made Jackie Coogan a star, *The Idle Class*, *Pay Day*, and *The Pilgrim*. Then came the surprise announcement that he was going to make a serious picture in which he would not appear.

There are several explanations as to why he decided on this sudden shift to a field in which he might have suffered an expensive failure. Of those who were close to him at the time, some say that he wanted to prove that he could evoke tears as well as laughter. Others have said that he had promised Edna Purviance that he would make her a star and that that was the chief reason why *A Woman of Paris* was produced.

But whatever his reason for making it, this movie was a milestone in my career. And although I didn't know it at the time, I

was identified with the picture weeks before it started. It happened one night shortly after I had finished in *Bella Donna*. I was having dinner in Marcelle's, at that time one of the few good restaurants in Los Angeles. My guest was an Italian doctor whom I had known in the Army while I was stationed in Italy. There was a reserved table next to ours with special flower decorations. We were naturally curious about who would occupy it. Finally Charlie Chaplin appeared with Peggy Hopkins Joyce and a group of friends.

I had been introduced to Chaplin while working with Doug Fairbanks, so I nodded as the party went by, but I doubt if Chaplin even remembered me. Still, when they were seated at their table, the whole party turned to look at me, and later Peggy Joyce and Chaplin kept glancing toward me until I finally became embarrassed. I was sure they were discussing me, but I couldn't guess why.

Later I discovered what they had been saying. It seems that the germ for the story of *A Woman of Paris* came from an anecdote Peggy had told Charlie about Henri Letellier, a wealthy *bon vivant* of Paris. While they were sitting in the restaurant staring at me, Peggy was explaining to him that I was a dead ringer for this wealthy Parisian.

A few weeks after the restaurant incident I learned about the part I eventually played in *A Woman of Paris* from Monta Bell, who held the remarkable title of Literary Adviser at the Chaplin Studios.

"This guy is a millionaire, a *boulevardier*, a typical Frenchman," Monta explained. "He is living in sin with Edna Purviance, only of course we will have to find some way to get around that because of the censors. He is the best-dressed man in Paris, a connoisseur of fine wines, race horses, and beautiful dames."

"Does he get killed in the second reel?" I inquired.

"Certainly not. He goes all through the story, and you know what that means in a Chaplin picture. You will have a steady job for months and months."

That sounded great to me. I had no idea whether the picture would be any good or whether the part was really important, but I knew that any part that ran for months and months was my kind of part. I determined to do everything I could to land the role of this wealthy Frenchman who worked for months and months at \$500 a week. According to Monta there were several other actors being considered for the part, but I figured that if I could make Chaplin believe that I was the very embodiment of this character he had in mind, I would have a better chance of getting the part. So I planned a campaign.

It was Chaplin's custom at that time to eat lunch almost daily either at Armstrong-Carlton's restaurant on Hollywood Boulevard or at Musso and Frank's across the street. For about two weeks I lunched at whichever restaurant I found Charlie. The first day I showed up in make-up wearing white tie and tails. My dress in itself did not make me especially conspicuous because half the actors dining in Hollywood restaurants at lunch time were in make-up and costume. But I found ways to be sure that I was conspicuous.

"Have you some fresh *escargots* today?" I inquired loudly of the waiter. "I prefer them broiled with garlic and white wine sauce."

The waiter looked blank. "Huh? What did you say you want, mister?"

"Snails, my good man," I explained. "Don't you serve snails?"

The waiter looked at me reprovingly and shook his head. They did not serve snails in any manner, never had, and he hoped to God they never would. I shrugged patronizingly and settled for hamburger steak.

On the following days I appeared in formal morning attire, a cutaway, white flannels, and even hunting tweeds with an Alpine hat—anything I thought a wealthy Parisian might wear. And of course I always looked rather bored by life and a little cynical. Whether my campaign actually landed the part for me, I don't know, but I'm sure it helped.

The next person to tell me about the part in *A Woman of Paris* was Eddie Sutherland, Chaplin's assistant director. He told me he had suggested my name to Charlie and had shown him a reel of a recent picture in which I appeared. Chaplin was interested but still undecided.

Then, a few days later Eddie telephoned and asked if I could drive to the studio with him and talk to Chaplin. I assured him that I could leave in ten minutes.

On the way Sutherland explained that he thought I had a good chance to get the part, because Chaplin hated to interview actors but had decided to talk to me. He usually hid in Sutherland's office and had Eddie "walk 'em by" outside so that he could get a look at the actors without having to talk to them. Chaplin did this because he was shy and sensitive; he hated to refuse an actor a job once he had talked to him.

But Sutherland also warned me that his boss might balk at my salary, which was \$500 a week; that was more than he had ever paid to anyone. However, when I was introduced to the little comedian, salary was never mentioned, and in ten minutes I had been hired for the part of Pierre Revel.

The contract I signed called for me to start work on or about December 15, 1922. In the picture business this customarily means three days before or three days later, but when December 18 arrived, shooting had not yet started. I waited another week, then went to Alf Reeves, who was Charlie's business manager, and asked for my first week's salary.

"Sutherland hasn't turned in your name," he informed me.

So I went looking for Eddie and finally found him. "Where's my pay check?" I asked.

"You haven't started work yet."

"That's not my fault," I told him. "I'm ready to work and I have a contract to work."

"If you upset Charlie by insisting on getting paid, he may just pay your six weeks' guarantee and let you go."

"If I don't get my salary at once," I assured him, "I won't work in the picture at all."

When I think of it now, my brassiness frightens me. There I was quibbling about a week's salary and my career was hanging in the balance. But Sutherland went to Chaplin and told him what I had said. According to Eddie, Chaplin called me some very unpleasant names but finally ordered a voucher sent through for my salary. Every week I went down and drew my pay check even though I was not called to start work until January 11.

In the meantime I was very busy with the tailors, getting together a wardrobe suitable for a Parisian millionaire. I had a new dress suit and a new dinner jacket made up, as well as an opera cape that cost me \$250 and that I have never worn to this day.

In my first interview with Charlie he told me about a marvelous race-track scene that was to be in the picture. I had a gray cutaway made for this scene and ordered a gray top hat to match. Unfortunately the race-track scene was never shot. That beautiful gray cutaway hung in my closet unworn for months and months. But three years later, when I had become a star, I had a race-track scene written into one of my pictures just so I could wear that outfit.

On the day Chaplin hired me for *A Woman of Paris* he told me the plot of the picture. It sounded like such a trite bit of schmalz that I was not particularly impressed. But Chaplin swore me to secrecy. I must tell the story to no one, not even my wife—especially my wife. He was afraid that it would get around and that somebody might steal it. I never did tell anybody the plot, but I discovered later that Chaplin had told it to everyone. He not only told his friends the plot, but revealed every scene in detail as we shot it.

The story was this: A country boy and girl fall in love. Because of the girl's tyrannical father they decide to elope to Paris, but after the sudden death of the boy's father, he fails to meet his sweetheart at the railroad station. The girl thinks he has aban-

doned her, and since she has burned her bridges behind her, she goes to Paris alone. A few months later she has become "a woman of Paris"—mistress of Pierre Revel, the wealthiest man in France. Revel is fond of her and showers her with every material thing she desires, but she longs for a normal married life—a home and children.

At the height of her luxurious life her former fiancé comes to Paris searching for her and discovers that she is a rich man's mistress. He is willing to forgive all and marry her, but because of a misunderstanding they quarrel and he commits suicide. The boy's mother, distraught by her son's death, determines to kill the girl; but when she finds her sobbing besides her son's bier, she realizes her mistake. In the end the girl leaves Revel and returns to the country to live with the boy's mother.

At first I had no great faith in the story. To me it was simply a job and a good part. Not until we started shooting did I begin to realize that we were making a novel and exciting picture. It was Chaplin's genius that transformed the very ordinary story. Aside from his own great talent as an actor he had the ability to inspire other actors to perform their best. Within a few days I realized that I was going to learn more about acting from Chaplin than I had ever learned from any director. He had one wonderful, unforgettable line that he kept repeating over and over throughout the picture. "Don't sell it!" he would say. "Remember, they're peeking at you."

It was a colorful and concise way to sum up the difference between the legitimate stage and the movies—a reminder that in pictures, when one has an important emotion or thought to express, the camera moves up to his face and there he is on the screen with a head that measures 6 feet from brow to chin. The audience is peeking at him under a microscope, so he can't start playing to the gallery 200 feet away, because there is no gallery in a movie theater; the audience is sitting in his lap.

From my early days in movies I had been schooled in the exaggerated gestures and reactions that were thought necessary

to tell a story in pantomime. But when I, or any other actor, would give out with one of those big takes, Chaplin would just shake his head and say, "They're peeking at you." That did it. I knew that I had just cut myself a large slice of ham and had tossed the scene out the window.

Since then I have never played a scene before a camera without thinking to myself, "They're peeking at you; don't sock it."

Another pet line of Chaplin's was, "Think the scene! I don't care what you do with your hands or your feet. If you think the scene, it will get over."

And we had to keep shooting every scene until we *were* thinking it—until we believed it and were playing it with our brains and not just with our hands or our feet or our eyebrows. If I remember correctly, we once did over 200 takes on one scene, and many scenes were shot more than 50 times. There were days when we rehearsed the same little scene time after time and then shot and reshot it until we thought we would go crazy. But Chaplin was satisfied with nothing less than perfection, or as close to it as we could come.

We were shooting for over eight months on the picture, a period that seems fantastic today. But Chaplin's studio overhead was small and there were no \$5,000-a-week stars to be paid. I think we all finally became inspired by Chaplin's devotion to perfection. It was not as though we were working for a salary; it was do or die for alma mater. The actors and the crew became a team trying to make the best picture it could.

Each morning the whole company—including electricians, grips, anybody who wanted to watch—was invited to the projection room to see the rushes of the film that had been shot the day before. We would all sit there and express our opinions. Chaplin listened to everybody's ideas and evaluated them with an unerring instinct for those that were good. He had no academic knowledge of proper dramatic structure, only an innate comprehension of good theater and how to portray either simple or complex ideas in pantomime without the aid of dialogue or subtitles. I re-



member hearing him say in an argument about a certain scene, "I don't know why I'm right about the scene, I just know I'm right." And it was true. We saw it proved many times when we would play scenes in various ways and then run them in the projection room.

After watching the rushes in the morning we would discuss them at some length and then we would usually go back to the stage and shoot some of the scenes over again. There was no worry about a production schedule; no effort was too great if 1 foot of the picture could be made better. One day, after watching the rushes of a scene, Chaplin expressed approval and asked me how I liked the scene.

"I think I can do it better," I told him.

"Great!" he replied. "Let's go." So we spent the rest of the day shooting the scene over again.

But there were many days when we did no work at all. We always reported at the studio, but sometimes Chaplin would not come in until eleven o'clock or two o'clock, or perhaps he would not come in at all. This was because he was creating as he went along, dreaming up new scenes or discarding old ones that he had decided he didn't like. While he was deciding what the next scene would be, we waited at the studio for him to make up his mind.

And we were never sure, when he did appear, just what his mood would be. The regular studio staff members claimed that they could gauge his mood by the suit he was wearing. They would call his house before he arrived and would try to learn from his valet what clothes he was wearing that day. If he were wearing his famous green suit, we would get ready for a bad day. The green suit was his melancholy suit. But if he were wearing a blue suit with pin stripes, that would be a sign of a good day; he would be in a jovial all's-right-with-the-world mood, and we would get some fine scenes shot. A gray suit meant a sort of in-between mood; we would never be sure whether things would go right on a gray-suit day, so we would feel our way for a while

until a definite mood developed. One or two of the staff had this suit-to-match-the-mood theory developed to a very fine degree. They claimed that they knew his whole wardrobe and that every suit in it had a different shade of meaning.

I think they were exaggerating; the only thing I noticed about Charlie's wardrobe was that it was deplorable. His clothes did not fit properly and there was no style to the way he wore them. I inquired one day who his tailor was, thinking that I would take great pains to avoid the fellow. To my horror Charlie confessed that he had no tailor, that he hated tailors. He had never had a tailored suit in his life! Instead of having his clothes made for him, he just went into a good clothing store and ordered half a dozen ready-made suits. It was quick and convenient to do it that way, he explained. He didn't like to waste time being fitted. I believed him; he looked terrible in his clothes. That was a long time ago. Since then he has outgrown this attitude.

Speaking of Charlie's moods, I remember that some days after lunch—probably on blue pin-stripe days—he would reminisce about his early days in the English music halls and would run through a repertoire of old acts. One stunt that he used to perform to amuse us was called "The Japanese Fisherman." He would roll up his pant legs and put a sofa cushion on his head to represent a Japanese hat; then he would wade into an imaginary ocean and begin to sing a gibberish that sounded like Japanese, all the while pretending to haul in his nets. His superb pantomime kept us roaring for an hour or more.

And he often did impersonations of various people imitating him. When he was making two-reel comedies, there were at least three motion-picture companies that hired comedians to imitate his dress, manner, and style of comedy. Of course, none of these bogus Charlies was comparable to the original. But Charlie had seen their pictures and could imitate all of them down to the last detail, including the various flaws in their performances.

These pleasant interludes came only occasionally. Most of the time we worked and slaved to get every scene as perfect as

Chaplin thought it should be. He insisted on our learning dialogue and saying it exactly as it was written, something that none of us had ever done before in pictures. This was because he felt that certain words registered on the face and could be easily grasped by the audience. He would work and work with Monta Bell and Eddie Sutherland to find just the right words that would show on our faces. That took extra hours and days that would not have been tolerated at one of the larger studios. The tendency toward rushing is one of the great troubles with Hollywood picture making. It's big business, and the studios try to put everything on a production line, so that writers, actors, and directors have to turn out movies just as a factory turns out nuts and bolts.

This was never Chaplin's method. To him motion pictures were a new art form and required the painstaking care that any art requires. Of course, he happened also to be an artist. Everyone who has worked with Chaplin the actor or with Chaplin the director seems to agree on that point, regardless of what he may think of him personally. The word "genius" is used very carelessly in Hollywood, but when it is said of Chaplin, it is always with a special note of sincerity. If Hollywood has ever produced a genius, Chaplin is certainly first choice.

## 15: *Truffle Soup with Champagne*

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THE Chaplin Studio was like no other moving-picture factory in town. There were no efficiency experts to ruin the product, no streamlined accounting machines to keep track of overtime and doubletime, no rush and bustle to confuse things. It was as full of junk and eccentric characters as a country store.

There was an Airedale dog without a master that was a fixture in the place. This dog had appeared in one of Chaplin's comedies—*The Kid*, I believe. I never learned whether Chaplin bought the dog or found it or whether it just wandered into the studio on its own. But after it had worked there, it became a privileged character and stayed until it died.

Charlie also had an artist around the place who lived and worked in the prop room, which he had converted into an art studio. I guess this fellow was a genius of some sort and Chaplin enjoyed being a patron of the arts. This artist was supposed to do a portrait of Edna Purviance, which was needed for a scene in *A Woman of Paris*. He painted and repainted this portrait; everybody made suggestions for improvement, and he tried to satisfy them all. Finally the painting began to take on a sort of Picasso-like, abstract quality that had absolutely no resemblance whatever to any person living or dead. So instead of using this special portrait of Edna in the picture, we used a crayon portrait that one of the prop boys whipped up in an hour and a half, using the cover of an old fan magazine for a model.

Chaplin wasn't satisfied to have one technical adviser for the picture—he hired two. Both of these men were specialists on Paris

and things Parisian. One was Harry D'Arrast, who later directed me in two of my best pictures, and the other was Jean de Limur, who also became one of my directors. There was friendly rivalry between the two and they would get into amusing arguments about the most unimportant technical details. Maybe it would be the chandelier in Revel's apartment.

"That looks more like a Swiss or a German lighting fixture," one would say. "It is definitely not French in character."

The other expert would then be sure to insist that the chandelier in question was absolutely and positively of authentic French *décor*—in fact was identical with one that he himself had seen in the apartment of the *real* Henri Letellier. They seldom agreed on anything. But that didn't matter because, as is customary in Hollywood, nobody pays much attention to the technical experts anyway.

One day Chaplin decided that he wanted some rare dish to be served and discussed in a dinner scene. The technical experts racked their minds to remember some of the exotic and expensive dishes served in Parisian restaurants. Finally one of them had an inspiration—truffle soup with champagne! The second expert refused to sanction such a dish. He had eaten at the best restaurants in Paris and never once had he been served such a *potage* as truffle soup!

But expert number one only curled his lip. "You have probably failed to dine at the finest restaurant of all," he replied. "It is a very small place where a very select clientele is allowed to dine by invitation only. It is called *La Truffe d'Or* and it is the one place in the world where they serve truffle soup with champagne."

Expert number two was sure he was being outexperted by sheer imagination, but despite his protests, Chaplin decided that he liked the idea of truffle soup with champagne and ordered the prop man to prepare such a dish. The prop man was stumped. He didn't even know what a truffle was. He refused to admit his ignorance, however, and called up several chefs in the town's

best restaurants to try to get a special order of truffle soup. But there were no truffles in all Los Angeles nor was there a chef who would attempt to make imitation truffle soup.

Prop men are always ingenious, however, so we ended up with a horrible concoction that looked like a clear soup with several withered objects floating in it. They might even have been truffles but they were probably some sort of deadly fungi grown in the shade of a nux vomica tree. No one ever had nerve enough to taste the truffle soup with champagne, but it was in the picture.

Anybody who ever saw *A Woman of Paris* remembers one scene in it, though he may have forgotten all the others. I have been asked scores of times about this scene, which was the one that disclosed that Marie, the girl, was Revel's mistress. Because of the censorship boards in various states (there was no Hays Office of censorship at the time) Chaplin had to indicate this relationship in a way that would not be obvious or offensive. He accomplished it in a manner that was, at that time, amazingly subtle.

This is the way the scene was developed: Revel came to the girl's luxurious apartment and was admitted by a maid. The audience had no idea who or what this man was in her life. Apparently he was just an admirer calling to take her out to dinner. Chaplin wanted to find some casual piece of business that would suddenly reveal that Revel was a frequent and privileged caller. A good many devices were discussed. First Chaplin had me pick up a pipe from the table and light it, but that was no good because Revel was not the pipe-smoking type. Then he considered having the maid bring me a pair of slippers, but that was out of key because I had called to take Marie out to dinner.

Finally Chaplin thought of the handkerchief business, which solved the problem. I went to a liquor cabinet, took out a bottle of sherry, and poured a drink, then sipped it. But when I started to take a handkerchief from my pocket, I discovered that I had none, so I turned casually and walked into the bedroom. Edna was at her dressing table, fully dressed but still fussing with her

coiffure. I didn't look at her and she paid no attention to me as I crossed to a chiffonier. There I opened a top drawer and took out a large gentleman's handkerchief, put it in my pocket, and walked out. Immediately the relationship was established: we were living together and had been for some time.

It happened that when Chaplin thought of this piece of business, the property man had not dressed the drawers of the chiffonier because he didn't know that they would be used. So I went to my dressing room and brought back several handkerchiefs and some of my dress collars and other accessories to fill the drawer. Later, when I rehearsed the scene, my sleeve caught on one of the collars and it fell out of the drawer. This gave Charlie an idea for a later scene in which the maid accidentally dropped a collar and thus disclosed to the girl's former sweetheart that she was living with Revel.

Little touches like this gave the picture a flavor that was new to picturemaking. Many of the simple pieces of business that were so effective on the screen required hours and days to achieve. There was the scene with the boy's mother when his body was brought home after he had committed suicide. Charlie didn't want her to react with typical motion-picture grief. He wanted her to stare, her emotions numbed by the immensity of her loss, and then, as she started automatically to continue her tasks about the house, suddenly to faint. It must have taken a week to get that scene shot.

The concept that Charlie had was too unorthodox for the actress to grasp at first. Try as she would, she could not help but react to the idea of sudden death in the usual scenery-chewing manner. But Charlie wouldn't give up; he turned the megaphone over to Sutherland for fear he was making the actress self-conscious. Eddie shot and reshot the scene. Finally Charlie resumed the director's task and after many, many more takes he finally got the scene the way he wanted it.

In the early part of the picture, when the girl took the train for Paris, Chaplin introduced two innovations that have been



A dramatic moment from *A Woman of Paris*, produced by Chaplin in 1923. Upon learning that Edna Purviance is my mistress, her childhood sweetheart has committed suicide in the lobby of a Paris restaurant before a statue symbolic of the typical woman of Paris. Edna can't take it.





Edna Purviance was Chaplin's leading woman in many of his comedies. *A Woman of Paris* was created for her, and the picture started me on the way to stardom, just as Chaplin predicted it would.

used many times since in motion pictures. The first was when the Paris train pulled into the station. Instead of showing an actual train, the scene was shot in reverse, with the camera on the girl. The train was only suggested by the outline of its shadow and the lights from its windows as it came to a halt beside the station platform and as the girl moved toward the camera to board it.

After the scene faded out there was a time lapse of several months and Marie was discovered in a luxurious apartment in Paris. What had happened in the intervening months, the details that led up to her becoming Revel's mistress, were left to the imagination of the audience. Today this skipping of unimportant details is quite common, but at that time it was revolutionary.

A scene that I'll never forget is one in which I had to embrace Edna Purviance. Chaplin wanted us to tell a great deal in that kiss. There was to be passion and yet no indication on my part that I was in love with Marie. On the other hand, she was to show that the kiss was not repulsive and yet that she was unhappy. It was like engraving the Constitution on the head of a pin—much to be told in a very confined space. Well, we kissed and we kissed. And what a pleasure it was to begin with—kissing this beautiful creature time after time. I thought it a delightful way to make a living. But after a while it got to be very hard work. Chaplin would look at me and shake his head as though I were the most amateurish osculator he had ever seen. Then he would show me how to kiss her. Then I would kiss her again, and again he would shake his head. I must have kissed her 150 times. I never got so sick and tired of kissing a beautiful girl in my life. By the time we got that scene in the can I was completely disillusioned about my qualifications as a Don Juan.

Then there was the scene in which Marie told me that what she wanted was a home and children. I went to the window and pointed down to the street where a husband and wife with three children were walking along the sidewalk. The kids were fighting with each other and the husband and wife were arguing. That

expressed plainly my viewpoint on marriage. But Marie still insisted that she was unhappy with her lot. At that I reached up and fingered the pearl necklace at her throat. I was inquiring how any woman could be unhappy with those. She angrily tore the pearls from her neck and tossed them out the window, thinking that would upset me. But the cost of a string of pearls was immaterial to me; I merely crossed to a couch and picked up a saxophone, which I was trying to learn to play.

Suddenly Marie became panic stricken at what she had done. The pearls were really important to her because she had been poor all her life. She dashed out of the apartment and down into the street to recover the valuable jewels. To me her anxiety over the pearls was a huge joke. I lay back on the couch and laughed helplessly at her feminine perverseness.

The development of this entire scene, from the moment Marie told me she wanted children through the laughing bit at the finish, took days and days in the shooting. Every possible way to express the content of the scene was explored and experimented with. It was remarkable how much Chaplin made us tell with just a look, a gesture, a lifted eyebrow. The laughing scene was one of the most difficult I have ever had to do. I laughed for one whole day. I laughed until I was exhausted; my stomach ached, my sides ached, my head ached.

One of the best scenes in the picture had to be cut after it was shown at previews. The audience laughed too hard and too long at it. This was a short bit at the railroad station, where a baggage-man was observed moving a trunk in the background. Nobody ever showed such contempt for other people's property. He pushed the trunk off a truck and it crashed to the station platform. Then he picked up the trunk and tossed it into a corner. Wham! He seemed to be doing his best to smash the trunk to kindling wood. All the people in the preview audience had seen baggagemen do the same thing to their own trunks. Now it was happening to somebody else's trunk and they yelled with delight—they screamed and laughed way into the next scene. This

bit was shot in such a way that the baggage smasher's face was obscured. The people in the audience couldn't have known that it was Chaplin himself playing the part; they were paying tribute to the artistry of an unidentified actor. Chaplin was delighted by the prolonged laugh, but he knew that it intruded, so he cut the scene down to only a brief flash. He wouldn't allow even himself to spoil the continuity of the picture.

## 16: *I Love That Villain*

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AS I have already said, Chaplin is one of the greatest directors I have ever worked under, and I think in those eight months I learned more about the business of acting than I ever learned from anybody else. But some of the technical mistakes he made drove the crew into a state of frenzy. There was one night that we worked for hours on an exterior location shot. Chaplin kept ordering the electrician to cut down the lights on the scene.

The cameraman objected. "It won't photograph, Mr. Chaplin."

"That's the way I want it," he insisted. "Low key—very low key."

That was the way it was shot. But next day, when the rushes were run, the film was completely blank. We couldn't see a thing.

"I guess I was wrong," Chaplin said with a wry grin.

That night we went back and shot the scenes all over again and he let the cameraman light it the way he had wanted to in the first place.

There is a basic rule in picture-making that if the movement of an actor or group of actors is first shown from right to left, the cameraman must never cut to a reverse shot of the scene because that will make the action change on the screen from left to right. It tends to confuse the audience, which is watching the actors and not the background so it cannot understand how the actors suddenly reverse their directions on the screen. Of course this

rule is sometimes broken, but only when special factors make it possible.

We did an exterior street scene near Westlake Park one day in which Charlie showed a couple of actors coming around the corner of the building from right to left. Then he moved his camera and shot the scene from the opposite direction. Sutherland and all the rest of the technical crew screamed their heads off. Eddie got so mad that he threatened to quit because Chaplin paid no attention to his protests.

It was the same old story. Next day in the projection room Charlie suddenly discovered that he had been wrong. The actors seemed to be playing two different scenes. In one they were walking east and in the next they were walking west. They returned to the scene of the crime and reshot it. This sort of thing would have been ruinous at another studio, but on a Chaplin film it was routine. Most of the scenes were reshot anyway, so no one thought anything of it.

There is a fantastic story about a conference that took place after the picture was finished. This conference lasted for something like nine hours, and the argument revolved about a simple question of grammar. Nobody in the studio could agree on which was the correct subtitle—"Who is it?" or "Who is she?" The conference would have continued indefinitely, according to Eddie Sutherland, except that Chaplin's Airedale walked into the conference room, listened for a few minutes, and then vomited.

Another conference that almost stopped the picture completely was one in which Chaplin suddenly dreamed up an ending. He had been shooting for months but had no ending. One day he came in and called the staff together.

"I have a wonderful ending for the picture," he said. "Listen to this. After John commits suicide, Marie leaves Revel and consecrates herself to a life of penance—she becomes a nurse in a leper colony. We see her—this beautiful, this lovely girl—performing menial tasks for these lepers, waiting for the inevitable end. Fade-out."

Assistant Director Sutherland stared; Literary Adviser Bell turned pale. There was a moment of dead silence.

"Well, how do you like it?" demanded Chaplin.

They didn't know what to say. After all, it's hard to tell the boss, especially one like Chaplin, that he's wrong, because maybe he's right.

"Never mind!" he snapped, then turned and walked out of the studio.

For several days Chaplin stayed away from the studio. Then one morning he appeared and remarked, "So you don't like the leper colony?"

"No!" chorused Monta and Eddie.

That was the end of the leper colony.

There is another story that Harry D'Arrast loves to tell as convincing proof that Charlie is an eccentric and unpredictable genius. Shooting had been suspended for a few minutes while the staff sat down to discuss a certain scene. During the discussion a fly kept buzzing around Charlie's head; he slapped at it several times, finally became annoyed, and called for a fly swatter. The swatter was obtained and Charlie took charge of it. As the discussion continued he watched the fly, waiting for an opportunity to swat it. But this was a very elusive fly. Three times Charlie swung at it and three times he missed. At last the fly settled on a table directly before him. He raised the swatter to deliver the death blow. Then he changed his mind and lowered his weapon, allowing the fly to escape.

"Why didn't you swat it?" someone demanded.

Charlie shrugged. "It wasn't the same fly."

Sometimes Charlie would go into one of his unproductive moods and disappear from the studio for several days at a time. When this happened, the actors got together and talked it over. Had he lost interest in the picture? Had he decided to throw it in the ash can? It wouldn't be the first time he had abandoned a picture in the making. There were days when we were sure he

would walk in and announce that the whole thing was off, that we were finished.

The thought haunted me because my part had been growing during the making of the picture. Originally Revel had just been the other man in a tragic love story. But as the months went by the character of Revel had developed until I was sure that Charlie was more interested in my part than in any of the others. And then one day he confirmed this in a way that almost floored me.

"Within two years after this picture is released," he told me, "you will be making five thousand dollars a week."

"You're joking, Mr. Chaplin," I replied.

"Not at all. I know the public. After they see you in this picture, they'll make you a star."

But it was not the public that made me a star; it was Chaplin, and I have never ceased to be grateful. However, just before the completion of the picture something happened that shook my faith in the film. That something was a *première* at the Egyptian Theater that I attended. The picture was *The Covered Wagon*.

I don't think I had ever been affected as much by any other picture except *The Birth of a Nation*. The theme of the pioneer movement to the West was new to the movies and tremendously exciting, and it lent itself wonderfully to the medium of silent pictures. The wagon trains moving across the vast plains, the Indian fights, and the development of the land were spectacles that could be told more effectively with the camera than with words. When I left the theater, I was completely dejected because in comparison *A Woman of Paris* seemed trifling and unimportant. How could the trite love story we were doing command any attention from the critics after they had seen an epic like *The Covered Wagon*?

But despite the greatness of *The Covered Wagon* as a spectacle and as one of the industry's top box-office successes, its fictional elements were unreal and its central characters were as



two-dimensional as paper dolls. A *Woman of Paris* had none of its epic qualities and none of its historical realism, but it did have a new kind of honesty in the portrayal of characters and their relationships to each other that was soon to bring praise and applause from both critics and public.

The world *première* of our picture was held at the Criterion Theater in Los Angeles just a few days before the opening in New York. I was the only featured member of the cast present for the *première*. The others had gone to New York with Chaplin and the production staff for the opening there.

Practically everybody of importance in Hollywood was at the Criterion that night. I had no way of knowing what might have happened to my part during the cutting and editing of the picture. All I had ever seen were the rushes at the studio, and sometimes they mean very little when the picture is put together. Whole sequences might have been cut out, leaving my best scenes on the cutting-room floor.

I sat through the first sequence of the picture in a state bordering on nervous prostration. Then at last came my first entrance, and suddenly the film broke. I died a dozen deaths waiting for it to be repaired so that the picture could continue. At last it flashed back on the screen and the scene continued. I saw myself going through the business of taking the handkerchief from the chiffonier drawer, and then from somewhere near by I heard the voice of Herbert Brenon, one of Hollywood's best directors. He exclaimed in a loud stage whisper, "Wonderful! Terrific!" I knew then that we were in. All through the picture I kept hearing Brenon's penetrating whisper telling those in his party that the picture was magnificent. Every subtle touch, every finely drawn characterization brought exclamations of appreciation from him.

When the picture was over, I went out of the theater in a daze. A *Woman of Paris* was even better than I had thought it would be. On the sidewalk in front of the theater I saw Harold Lloyd stepping into his car with his wife. As he turned and sat

down he saw me. He was too far away to say anything; he just gripped his hands above his head in a handshake and grinned his congratulations across the heads of the crowd. It was one of the big thrills of my life, for I was not intimately acquainted with Lloyd, and this recognition from one of Hollywood's greatest stars meant that Menjou had arrived.

Although the reviews next day in the Los Angeles papers were all laudatory, I waited anxiously for the final returns from the New York critics. The local papers were sometimes extravagant in their praise when sophisticated New York critics were lukewarm or even condemning. At last the clippings arrived from New York and the verdict was unanimous—*A Woman of Paris* was "the finest piece of filmery of the year . . . marked a great step forward . . . achieved artistry and authenticity . . . will have a powerful influence for good on the motion-picture industry . . . was devised by an adult mind for people of intelligence."

But the sweetest words of all were those spoken in my praise by those critics who had panned me so unmercifully for my performance in *The Faith Healer*. They had all reversed their opinions, including my most outspoken hater, Alan Dale. He wrote:

I loved that villain played by Adolphe Menjou and priceless played. . . . His imperturbable urbanity was delicious. . . . He was exquisite. . . . One of the finest screen performances I have ever seen. . . . If there was ever a more subtle and delightful characterization, I have missed it.

## 17: *The Hays Office*

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A FEW months before we started *A Woman of Paris*, the major studios had established what is known as the Hays Office in an effort to keep Hollywood out of censorship trouble. But at first the Hays Office had no regulatory power over the content of motion pictures, so Chaplin was concerned only with the requirements of those state and city censorship boards that might frown on the relationship between the characters portrayed by myself and Edna Purviance. The story of a girl who becomes a millionaire's mistress might easily have been banned or severely scissored in several states. But Chaplin was successful in telling the story in terms that were not offensive to the censors.

Because Chaplin had succeeded in making a daring and sophisticated story without censorship trouble, many other producers attempted the same thing but achieved only the tawdry and sensational. There was at this period a rash of sex pictures. The titles of some of them give a fair idea of their contents—*Husbands for Rent*, *Week-end Wives*, *One Week of Love*, *Her Purchase Price*, *Paid to Love*, *Mad Love*, *Good-Bad Wife*, *Red-Hot Romance*.

Pictures of that sort furnished high-power ammunition for reformers, moralists, and religious groups, and eventually forced the Hays Office to assume the job of the industry's policeman.

Movie censorship goes back to the very beginning of the industry. One of the most interesting exhibits at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City is a picture called *The Kiss*, which, when it was released in 1896, brought cries of protest from reli-

gious organizations, the leaders of women's clubs, and newspaper editors, who considered public osculation reprehensible. The stars of this much-discussed film were May Irwin and John C. Rice, two popular character actors of that day. They were starring in a stage play called *The Widow Jones*, and the high moment of the comedy came when the couple exchanged a moderately lengthy and exceedingly noisy kiss. The Edison company filmed *The Kiss* minus the osculatory noises in a close-up that lasted all of 50 feet. Although it was never intended to be anything but amusing, the Irwin-Rice kiss was called indecent and vulgar.

Through the years that followed a good many films were released that would seem innocuous by today's standards but that affronted certain individuals or groups of that day and resulted in sporadic reform movements against motion pictures.

By the end of World War I America had arrived at the jazz and prohibition era, and it was only natural that movies began to reflect the new moral attitudes that followed in the wake of the war. When Hollywood discovered that sex was no longer a taboo topic, even in women's magazines, the producers took off the wraps and gave the subject an all-out whirl. Sex, libido, bathtub gin, Freud, speak-easies, and joy riding were the new trends in pictures as they were in America itself.

At this point a number of states began to pass censorship bills and hundreds of cities set up their own boards of censorship. And numerous reform organizations sharpened their knives and howled for the scalps of the motion-picture producers. But for the most part Hollywood took a cynical attitude toward these faraway screams; the movie makers had weathered reform movements before and they couldn't be bothered.

Then in 1921, while I was making *The Sheik*, a picture that suffered a few censorship troubles of its own, the reformers were supplied a juicy scandal with which to attack Hollywood. It happened that a very close friend of mine was involved—the man who had sponsored me in Hollywood, advised me, and helped me get my first job. He was known to millions of fans as Fatty

Arbuckle, one of the most popular comedians in Hollywood. An Eastern newspaper revealed that back in 1917 Arbuckle had been the guest of honor at a movie exhibitors' meeting that had moved to a roadhouse outside Boston and developed into what was described as a sort of bacchanalian orgy. If Arbuckle had not been a Hollywood star, the newspapers would probably never have played up this four-year-old affair. They hinted that a few weeks after the party the participants raised a \$100,000 fund as a bribe to stop a legal complaint from being filed against them; and this bribery of a state prosecutor was now being investigated.

In newspapers all over the country editors deplored the licentiousness of those in Hollywood who made the pictures their children viewed; and in Massachusetts a proposition calling for state censorship of movies was placed on the ballot. Hollywood began to worry, but not seriously. On Hollywood Boulevard the opinion was that people wouldn't stand for any serious censorship of movies. After all, it was a violation of the right of free speech!

But in the rest of the country civic groups and parent-teacher associations were holding more and bigger indignation meetings, while editors were still fulminating against Hollywood. And that was just the beginning; for the roadhouse scandal had hardly ceased to be front-page news when Arbuckle became involved in a still more sensational affair. Following a drinking party in a San Francisco hotel that had been attended by several people connected with the picture business, a little-known picture actress died under circumstances that required a coroner's inquest.

As a result, Arbuckle was charged with manslaughter. Then the newspapers and the wire services really went to town, painting Hollywood as a place of corruption and evil goings on and the movie makers as drunken libertines. The producers and distributors were finally frightened into action.

When the scandal broke, I was working on a picture at Paramount, where Arbuckle was under contract. The place was in a frenzy. The studio had thousands of dollars tied up in unreleased

Arbuckle pictures, so of course they rushed to the defense of their star. Everybody in Hollywood did the same, for we felt that he was being made a fall guy by San Francisco, the traditional enemy of Los Angeles. But the thing that worried Hollywood most was that exhibitors all over the United States who had contracted for the Arbuckle pictures notified Paramount that they would not show the films.

After two jury disagreements Arbuckle was finally acquitted of the charge of manslaughter. But he never recovered from the experience he had gone through. He was never again the same funny fat man, and I think the effect of his boycott throughout America finally killed him.

While the Arbuckle trials were still in progress, the movie producers and distributors gathered to try to pull the fat out of the fire, for they could feel the hot breath of Federal censorship on their necks, and there was barely time to do something about it. Three months after the Arbuckle scandal had hit the front pages twelve of the leading producers and distributors signed a round robin and presented it to Will H. Hays, at that time Postmaster General of the United States. He was offered the position of Movie Czar at a salary of \$100,000 a year. His job would be to make a few friends for the motion-picture industry and to influence as many people as possible to believe that the movie colony was not composed entirely of actors with loose morals who indulged daily in drunken revels.

But even before Hays could officially accept the offer lightning struck Hollywood for the third time. On the morning of January 2, 1922, while I was working at Fox Studios in *The Fast Mail*, William Desmond Taylor, one of the industry's leading directors, was found murdered in his bachelor's quarters. Newspaper reporters from every big paper in the country swarmed into Hollywood like ants into a jam pot, for it was by far the best murder mystery Hollywood had ever produced.

I was one of the lucky ones who knew Taylor only slightly, for almost everyone who was well acquainted with him and who

did not have an airtight alibi was hounded by either the district attorney's office or the newspaper reporters. There were plenty of stellar names in the cast of that drama; Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter headed the list. The murder, which was never solved, involved such sensational angles as dope peddling and the ownership of intimate feminine garments that were found in the murdered man's apartment. Twelve days later Will Hays took over the job of improving the public relations of the motion-picture industry—and not a moment too soon.

The organization that Hays headed is now called the Motion Picture Association of America, but it has seldom been spoken of in Hollywood as anything but the Hays Office, though now it is sometimes called the Johnston Office, after Eric Johnston, who succeeded Mr. Hays in the job of Czar. Mr. Hays's first accomplishment after he became Czar was to stop the rising tide of censorship in over thirty states as well as in Congress. After that the producers settled back with a sigh of relief and went right on making the same sort of pictures they had been making before the trouble started.

Naturally, Hollywood continued to be the target of reformers, moralists, and religious groups despite Will Hays's efforts as a front man to whitewash the industry. It was not until 1924 that he convinced the movie makers that the only way they could prevent serious censorship from outside the industry was to censor their own product. The producers then adopted a sort of gentlemen's agreement that they would not purchase or produce stories that did not meet with the "highest possible moral and artistic standards."

The trouble with this agreement was that gentlemen seldom agree on what constitutes the "highest moral and artistic standards," even outside Hollywood. Three years later, after continuous and expensive censorship troubles, the gentlemen met again and agreed to a list of "don'ts" that were supposed to keep pictures cleaned up. But there was still no power of enforcement in this agreement, so inevitably the "don'ts" crept back into pictures.

By 1930 talking pictures had come in and had created new problems of censorship, for dialogue magnified bad taste and made offensive scenes still more offensive. Threatened by a serious boycott of theaters as well as of pictures, the producers finally agreed to the present Production Code, which specifically defines the things that may not be done or said in a picture and gives the Hays Office the final judgment on whether a picture may be released with its seal of approval.

The Hays Office accomplishes numerous tasks of which the public is unaware, but its most publicized function is the censorship of all motion pictures before they are released for public exhibition. No producer can buy a novel, no writer can write a screen play, no director can shoot a picture, no actor can kiss an actress (before a camera) without having the Hays Office cast a censorial eye over his shoulder.

The Production Code, which states in black and white just what is not considered the "highest possible moral and artistic standards"—or, in other words, what is naughty—is administered by a special group of censors in the Hays Office. These men pass on the censorable situations in plays and novels even before the studios purchase them. They read shooting scripts and advise the studios of any scenes that may be censorable, then view the finished picture and okay it for distribution.

The Production Code is in itself an interesting document. It strives to please almost all powerful reform groups in an effort to comply with everybody's ideas of the "highest moral and artistic standards." The Catholic and Protestant Churches, as well as lay societies dedicated to the prevention of sin and vice, played a most important part in writing the Code. Even the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Women's Christian Temperance Union influenced certain provisions of the Code.

Sometimes the Code goes to fantastic lengths to be sure that the most sensitive eyes and ears are not offended.



Needless to say, the all-inclusive scope of the Code causes daily howls of anguish from writers, producers, and directors. "Getting by the Hays Office" has become one of Hollywood's most interesting games.



In 1930 I starred in *Mon Gosse de Père*, the first talking picture ever made in France. It was shot in two languages. In the French version Alice Cocca played the feminine lead, and in the English version Elissa Landi was the love interest.



In 1931 a little-known juvenile named Laurence Olivier supported me in *Friends and Lovers*. Today he is England's leading actor-producer. Recently he was knighted for his picture *Henry V*.



Verree Teasdale and I met at Frank Morgan's home in 1933. A few months later we visited the marriage-

## 18: *Hollywood Pluck*

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**I**N Hollywood all rumors are streamlined for speed. When Mr. Zukor used to sneeze on the Paramount lot, Mr. Ince would know about it at Metro before you could tie your shoelace. Even before I knew that I was going to be a hit in Chaplin's new picture all the casting directors had heard that I would be. So after completing *A Woman of Paris* I had no trouble getting jobs. I did four pictures in the latter half of 1923. Three of them were very large cuts of Gorgonzola—*The Spanish Dancer* and *Shadows of Paris* with Pola Negri and *The Marriage Cheat* with Leatrice Joy, who later married John Gilbert. But the fourth, *The Marriage Circle*, was good. It was a delight to work in, and it was a smash hit at the box office.

In the cast of *The Marriage Circle* were Marie Prevost, Florence Vidor, and Monte Blue. Ernst Lubitsch was the director. They say that he was influenced by Chaplin's direction of *A Woman of Paris*, but I doubt this because the latter film had not yet been released; however, he may have seen it at a private showing before release. But inevitably the two pictures were compared by all reviewers, and they were both on all lists of the year's best pictures, which included Erich von Stroheim's *Foolish Wives*, Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments*, *Robin Hood*, starring Doug Fairbanks, *Safety Last*, Harold Lloyd's best-remembered film, and *The Green Goddess* with George Arliss.

Lubitsch, as a director, had the same regard for realistic and subtle touches as Chaplin, but his methods were entirely different. Lubitsch planned everything very carefully in advance; he knew the content of every scene before he began shooting, and he acted

out every part in rehearsal. I discovered in this picture that all I had to do to make Lubitsch happy was to step before the camera and mimic every gesture he gave me.

The Lubitsch method produced some very good pictures, for he was a fine director; but Chaplin taught me much more about my business. I was better prepared to play the part in *The Marriage Circle* because of the training I had received from Chaplin in *A Woman of Paris*.

By the end of 1923 I was beginning to feel that I was a real somebody in Hollywood. I was making \$1,000 a week, and the critics were buttering me up with very fine adjectives that tickled my vanity. One of the female reviewers said, "Adolphe Menjou has a beautiful smile, a smile as subtle and disturbing as the Mona Lisa's." I thought that wasn't half bad—being compared with one of the great art treasures of the world. Then some fellow who was probably getting expensive presents from Warner Brothers remarked in his review of *The Marriage Circle*, "Similes fail and would be useless in describing the finished performance of Adolphe Menjou. . . . He is the lifted eyebrow, the tongue in cheek of the movie world. With him as one of the cast the film is assured of a goodly amount of subtlety and of a worldly humor."

This sort of talk is heady wine to an actor. Get enough of it, and you begin to try to live up to it—off the stage as well as on. Yes, indeed. They were ripening me for the Hollywood pluck, something to which every successful movie actor is exposed. Some avoid it, but most of us are plucked sooner or later.

Having been recognized by the critics as a man of the world, a sophisticate, and a connoisseur of the arts, I decided that I needed a place where I could properly entertain other men of the world, such as former nickelodeon proprietors who were now millionaire producers, former vaudevillians now matinee idols, former truck drivers now directors, and former police reporters now influential columnists. So I bought a house, spent \$15,000 remodeling it, then began visiting antique shops and Persian-rug dealers.

The word quickly spread around town that another sucker

was on the buy. The chiselers moved in like a pack of hungry wolves, and in no time at all I was in hock up to my eyebrows.

But I was smart. I didn't buy from high-priced decorators; I bought bargains from little dealers who could afford to sell at ridiculous prices because they didn't have high overheads. Yes, indeed! They were connoisseurs and experts; they sold me the best phony antiques in town for three times what they were worth. They not only plucked me, they tore the hide right off my back.

I think the worst beating I took was on Oriental rugs. That racket makes the shell game look as innocent as hopscotch. I found a fellow who was the greatest expert in the world. He was an Armenian who came from a long line of illegitimate sons of an ancient Persian pasha. This bandit had a direct underground railroad to an old palace in Hindustan or Turkey or some place, and his agents were sneaking out the old antique rugs and replacing them with Sears Roebuck carpets. In this way he was able to sell me a rug for my dining room for only \$1,500 that was positively worth not a penny less than \$3,000—a genuine Ispahan, very old. Its antiquity I can vouch for; it looked like something the Crusaders had marched across. It was torn; it had holes in it. But the Armenian pointed to those holes with pride.

"Can't you repair it?" I asked.

"Repair thees magnificent rug!" he shouted. "Sacrilege! You do not touch these holes! They are beautiful!"

So, being only an amateur connoisseur of art, I could not argue with this expert. I looked at the rug with some doubt but still with great admiration, believing in its authenticity. In fact, I used to bring my friends into the dining room and point ostentatiously to that rug with the holes.

"Worn by the feet of many beautiful dancing girls," I would explain.

Then, one day we had a fire in the basement. The maid was using some cleaning fluid near a gas burner and the house caught on fire. We turned in an alarm and started moving furniture out

on the front lawn. But before we could move the dining-room furniture the firemen showed up. Of course they could not go around to the back door in order to get to the basement; that would have been a violation of the firemen's code of ethics; they ran in the front door and went through the dining room. Finally, when the fire had been extinguished, I took a look at my beautiful dining-room rug and to my horror it was ruined. The firemen had spilled chemicals on it and had torn another large hole in it.

I was very upset. Of all the rugs in the house this one was the finest, and they had damaged it beyond repair. My one consolation was that I had plenty of insurance. When the insurance adjuster arrived, I led him to the dining room and showed him my rug. I practically wept over it.

"How much did you pay for it?" he asked, kicking nonchalantly at one of the torn fragments.

"Fifteen hundred dollars, but it's worth a great deal more."

He gave me a sad look and shook his head. "If you paid more than two hundred and fifty, you were robbed."

I stared at him and my blood ran cold. To be cheated out of over \$1,000 is very abhorrent to a man with French blood, but to be cheated by an Armenian was more than my pride could stand. I lay awake that night trying to think how I could get back at that Armenian swindler. And finally I conceived a plan.

Next morning I called up this burglar and told him of my great misfortune—how the Ispahan had been damaged by the firemen.

"Have you got another one like it?" I asked.

"Oh, no," he replied. "There ees not another rug like her in America."

"What a pity," I said sadly.

"Yes, yes, what a pity," he moaned. "It breaks my heart to theenk of that magneeficent rug being damaged."

Finally I suggested that he send out half a dozen of his very finest rugs for me to choose from. I wanted to buy a new rug for the dining room and none but the best would do. That after-

noon the rugs arrived. Then I called this brigand again and made an appointment with him to come to the house. I explained that I wanted him to help me select the proper rug for my dining room. He agreed to come.

In the meantime I had my lawyer, the insurance adjuster, and a stenographer come to my home just before the appointed hour. When my fine Armenian friend drove up, the others hid behind the door leading from the dining room to the kitchen. I opened the front door myself and led my victim into the dining room.

"There it is," I said, pointing to the rug. "You can see that it is ruined."

He groaned and beat his chest as he looked at the rug. "What a terrible catastrophe! That beautiful rug!"

"As I remember," I said, "I paid you fifteen hundred dollars for the rug."

"That ees true, but she was worth much more."

"Naturally. It's a genuine Ispahan, is it not?"

"Oh, yes. The finest example of the rug weaver's art."

"You guarantee that, don't you?"

"Oh, absolutely."

That was all I wanted to hear. I turned to the door where the others were hiding and opened it with a flourish. Then I revealed to this Armenian porch climber that the stenographer had taken down every word he had said and that my lawyer and the insurance expert were witnesses.

Faced by all four of us he knew he was caught. It was like a scene from a movie, and I played it to the hilt. This fellow turned white, he gulped, and he choked. Then he asked for a glass of water.

"You'll get no glass of water in my house," I shouted. "I am keeping the six rugs you sent me until I get my money back. And if I don't get it, I'll sue you!"

I got my money back, but still I was not cured. It wasn't long afterward that I bought a set of dress studs—at a bargain. I paid \$900 for them and thought I was getting them at wholesale. One



night I was wearing the studs, feeling very proud of them—solid gold. I have always been partial to solid gold articles because in a pinch you can always find a good market for them, especially if they are not engraved with your initials. But this night I met a manufacturing jeweler who looked at my studs in a very admiring way.

“Nice studs.”

“Yes.”

“My firm happened to make those studs.”

“Really?” I thought I would find out just how much of a bargain I had purchased. “What is the retail price of studs like these?”

“Three hundred dollars,” he said without a moment’s hesitation.

Three hundred dollars! I had been robbed again!

When I recall how a certain philatelist tried to cheat me with phony postage stamps, I blush with shame to think that my father’s son was such a sucker. I had always been interested in collecting stamps, so when I began to make money I started to enlarge my collection with some of the very fine stamps I had always wanted. When I used to walk into a stamp dealer’s place of business, he would rub his hands together and lock the door for fear I would get away.

I bought several expensive stamps from a dealer in New York. One of these was a \$500 United States revenue stamp that was very rare. I paid \$1,350 for this one; it was supposed to be in perfect condition. I also bought a rare inverted center for \$900 that catalogued for over \$1,000. Bargains again!

I bought in all some \$5,000 or \$6,000 worth of stamps from this one dealer. Some time later Mr. Warren Colson of Boston, one of the leading experts on stamps in this country, was examining my collection and discovered that my rare \$500 United States revenue stamp had a thin spot. I was dumbfounded, for it had been sold to me as perfect. I immediately returned the stamp to this dealer and demanded a refund. He refused, claiming that I

must have damaged the stamp. That made me suspicious, so I had all the stamps that I had purchased from him examined very carefully. To my dismay I discovered that two stamps with inverted centers, which were supposed to be perfect, were actually canceled stamps. The cancellation perforations had been cleverly replaced, thereby greatly increasing the apparent value of the stamps. One of these stamps bore the dealer's signature on the back, guaranteeing it to be perfect. This particular stamp had cost only \$65, but it saved me much money, for it was proof that the dealer had misrepresented his wares to me. When I threatened to sue, he refunded my money.

Once you get on the Hollywood gravy boat, it is no trick to make money; the trick is to keep it. Hollywood is full of con men, thieves, and burglars, working night and day to separate the gullible actor from his earnings. And it is very hard for an actor to keep his feet on the ground when he gets in the big money. Imagine actors making \$1,000, \$5,000, \$10,000 a week! How can a man who never had anything but a toothbrush and a make-up box be expected to know what to do with that kind of currency? Some of us have learned, after bitter experience. But we have had to study up on a subject that is completely foreign to the average actor—money. I learned the hard way, but I finally did learn, and today I admit it freely—I am a keen student of the dollar.

## 19: *Getting the Girl*

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**I**T was about 1924 when I became a true native of movieland. It takes three or four years for this to happen. When you first arrive, you can't adjust yourself to a world that thrives on travesty. There are actors with swimming pools, cowboys who have never roped a steer, blockheads who are called geniuses, seven-year-old children earning more money than the President of the United States, and many more phenomena equally absurd. But one day you wake up and discover that all this nonsense seems perfectly normal. Not until then are you a bona fide citizen of Hollywood.

This happened to me in my first picture with Monta Bell, who had helped Chaplin write *A Woman of Paris*. One night he and his wife dropped in and Monta announced that he had just quit Chaplin and was going to become a director.

"But you've never directed a picture," I said. "How can you get a job as a director?"

"I have a great idea," he answered. "If you'll give me an option on your services, I'll get a job as a director and I'll make you the star of my first picture."

Naturally I wanted to be a star, so I took a chance and gave Monta my word that for ten days I would accept no other picture assignment while he went out and tried to make a deal. The idea didn't seem fantastic, and in Hollywood it wasn't.

At that time Warner Brothers was in bad shape financially. It lacked both stars and directors. Monta went to Harry Rapf, one of its producers, and sold his bill of goods. A few weeks later we started shooting *Broadway after Dark*.

For the love interest in the picture, Monta found an unknown

ingénue whom he had seen in *The Leather Pushers* with Reginald Denny. Her name was Norma Shearer.

*Broadway after Dark* had been a melodrama with a villain so deep in skulduggery that even his mother couldn't have forgiven him. Monta revamped the story, turning the heavy, which I played, into a Broadway playboy with a barrellful of money and with two girls in every chorus. At the end of the picture I was supposed to lose the girl to the juvenile hero.

But after about three weeks of shooting we began to realize that the virtuous young hero was a stuffed shirt and an awful bore. Monta began to worry about the way the character and the picture were turning out; he went around looking as glum as a sick hound-dog. Then, one morning he rushed into my dressing room full of enthusiasm, a big grin on his face.

"I've licked it!" he shouted. "I've got a twist for the love story. The heavy is going to get the girl!"

It was a mad idea. It defied all tradition. There was a hero and a heavy in every motion picture, and the audience knew from the beginning who was going to get the girl. It was never the character I played—that mustache twirler who sneered at marriage and hated babies. But after four years I had grown used to Hollywood inconsistencies. I assured Monta that in the last reel I could twirl my mustache in a heroic manner and act like a fellow who could settle down in a vine-covered cottage.

That was the way we shot the final scenes of the picture, and it worked. The fans were delighted when the lady-killer with 100 phone numbers was roped and tamed by a demure and simple maiden.

But that was the last time I got the girl for quite a while. Even though I had won her in Monta's picture, nobody else would take a chance on making me the love interest. In my next picture, *For Sale* (with Claire Windsor) I played that well-worn character, the jaded millionaire who will save the heroine's father from financial ruin if she will consent to marriage. Then came *Sinners in Silk*. That was during the "sinner and sex" cycle, when pro-

ducers discovered that the best way to turn a weak picture into a hit was to put "sin," "sex," or "sinner" in the title. I played a fifty-year-old widower who got rejuvenated (new glands) and courted a girl half his age; but she fell in love with my son, so in the end I settled down to carpet slippers and frustration.

I had just finished *Sinners in Silk* when Adolph Zukor sent for me and offered me a contract with Paramount. At that time Paramount Pictures and its subsidiaries held a commanding position in the motion-picture business. It owned or controlled production studios in Hollywood and Long Island, several thousand theaters, a world-wide distributing organization, and a list of contract stars that included Gloria Swanson, Thomas Meighan, Valentino, Bebe Daniels, Pola Negri, Agnes Ayres, Richard Dix, Betty Compson, Mae Murray, and Milton Sills. A contract with Paramount was an important step toward becoming a top Hollywood star. I signed with the company at \$1,000 a week, with options for two more years up to \$3,000.

My first year with Paramount was not entirely a happy one. I had a feeling that the sophisticated character I was playing would soon be passé, so I was impatient to get better parts and better scripts; and I wanted to win the girl occasionally, because the fellow who got the girl usually got the best salary.

But Jesse Lasky, vice-president in charge of production, could not see me as the type that the heroine falls in love with. She could fall in love with the fatherly characters Tommy Meighan played or the bumbling bumpkins portrayed by Charlie Ray or wistful boys like Richard Barthelmess, but not with a slick guy who obviously had dishonorable intentions the moment he looked at her.

But when *The Swan* was released, the critics disagreed. They said, "Poor Menjou! He is always giving up the girl. Won't somebody find Adolphe a girl of his own? . . . The audience would have liked to shanghai the hero and see Menjou get the girl."

That was all I needed. I demanded a new deal for Menjou. But Zukor refused to see me and Lasky just shook his head to

everything I wanted. I don't blame them. I demanded more money, approval of scripts, star billing, only four pictures a year, and a few other incidentals. I didn't expect to get all that, but I tried.

When Zukor and Lasky turned me down on everything, I was in a mood to fight, so I decided to go on a strike. Within a week my wife and I were aboard the S.S. *Paris* bound for France; I was going to show Mr. Zukor and Mr. Lasky that I didn't need their job. Unfortunately, they didn't need me as badly as I needed a job—and they knew it.

On the first day out of New York I began to worry. Perhaps I had been unreasonable. If I had stayed in Hollywood, I might have run into Lasky or Zukor on the golf course and arrived at a friendly understanding. After all, my salary had reached \$2,000 a week, and an actor can afford to play very bad parts for that kind of money. All the way across I hoped for a wireless message from Zukor or Lasky offering some sort of a compromise.

When we landed at Cherbourg I rather expected my father's homeland to give me a triumphal reception. But nobody paid any attention to me; nobody even knew me. The porters heard me speaking French, assumed that I would not tip them as well as the American tourists, and tried to avoid carrying our luggage. I was very discouraged.

When we arrived at the railroad station in Paris, I had one small moment of triumph. Three newspaper movie critics were there to interview me. At first I thought that they might have heard some news from Hollywood—that rumors had reached France of impending disaster to Paramount because Menjou was on strike. But that was not the case. They were there strictly in line of duty.

They assured me that I was the greatest actor in American movies; for was I not a Frenchman and were not Frenchmen the finest actors in the world? Where, by the way, had I received my early training? Perhaps in some small theater in the provinces?

I explained that I was not a Frenchman. I was an American,

born in Pittsburgh. They exchanged horrified glances. All Paris, they informed me excitedly, believed that I was a Frenchman—in fact, all patrons of the cinema in France had been led to believe by the distributors of American pictures that I was a citizen of France. Furthermore, if I was an American, how could I speak French so fluently and without a trace of accent?

My father was French, I told them, and I had spoken French ever since I was a child. This seemed to help a bit, but I could tell that they were disappointed in my belief that I was an American. The articles they wrote about me later somehow conveyed the impression that I was only temporarily sojourning in the United States and would one day return to my fatherland to take up my rightful position in the French theater. Even today most French picture fans are under the impression that I am a Frenchman.

We went to the hotel and I inquired casually for cable messages from the United States. There were none. Next morning there was still no cablegram from the United States. I began to grow exceedingly despondent; I was on strike, but nobody back at Paramount seemed to be worried about it.

With grim determination I tried to put pessimistic thoughts from my mind. My wife and I went on a wild cultural orgy. We visited the Louvre, the Palace of Versailles, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Fontainebleau, the Tuileries, the Eiffel Tower.

When five days had elapsed, I lay awake most of that night pondering my position. I was thousands of miles from Hollywood and the motion-picture stages. Nobody was begging me to come back and no money was coming in. It seemed to me that already I must be forgotten in the moving-picture business. And it was a business that I loved, for an actor must act or he is unhappy.

Suddenly I realized that my strike was a bust; I was one lone star against all those others who were still busy making pictures for Paramount. The company would go right on making pictures, and soon I would be as forgotten as last week's newspaper. Next

morning I told my wife to start packing; there was just time to catch the S.S. *Paris* back to New York.

Upon my return I learned that Lasky was in New York. A meeting was arranged and I went to his office on Fifth Avenue. After considerable argument Lasky refused to give me a new contract but raised my salary to \$3,000 a week. That was more than I had expected, so I was satisfied. We shook hands and made a golf date for the first Saturday he would be back in Hollywood.

Paramount had never looked so good to me as it did on the day I went back to work and back on salary. It was exactly four weeks after I had walked out on my one-man strike. Lasky had told me in New York that he had no picture planned for me and that something would have to be developed. That suited me fine, because it gave me a chance to work with the writers and the director in preparing a script. When I arrived at the studio, I went straight to Walter Wanger's office. I was full of enthusiasm and anxious to get started.

"How would you like to do a picture with Florence Vidor and Betty Bronson?" he asked.

"Fine! Great! What's the story?"

"It's a novel we have just bought from Alice Duer Miller called *Are Parents People?*"

"What's my part like?"

"You will play Betty Bronson's father."

For a moment I was stunned. I was only thirty-five and they were relegating me to father parts! "If I'm Betty Bronson's father," I exploded, "then I must have been married at sixteen! Do I look like a character actor?"

Walter tried to calm me down. "Why don't you talk to the director, Adolphe? Maybe we can change the story."

"Who is the director?"

"He's a new man we've just brought over from Warner Brothers. His name is Mal St. Clair."

"St. Clair!" I exclaimed. "He's been making Rin-Tin-Tin pictures with Darryl Zanuck. He's a dog director!"



Walter insisted that it took more skill to direct a dog than it did to direct an actor, but I was not convinced. A dog director! I was ready to go on strike again! They tell me I could be heard all over the Administration Building as I walked down the hall in search of Mal St. Clair's office. I was complaining loudly.

"What are they trying to do, turn me into another Rin-Tin-Tin? I swallow my pride and come back to this jute mill, and what happens? They give me a dog director!"

At that moment a fellow 6 feet 6 inches tall and as thin as Theda Bara's nightgown stuck his head out of a doorway and looked at me with an amused grin on his face.

"Where," I inquired grimly, "will I find Mal St. Clair's office?"

"This is it," he answered, still grinning, "and I'm the guy you're looking for."

The famous Menjou aplomb failed me. I wished at that moment that I had had a script writer along to give me a smart answer. But the grin on Mal's face finally reassured me. I smiled back and we shook hands.

"Come on in and sit down," he invited. "We've got a great story and you'll love the part."

I sat down and in ten minutes Mal convinced me that he knew how to make pictures regardless of his canine past. We spent all of that first morning getting acquainted and exchanging ideas on the new picture; then we went out to lunch. By the time we came back we were practically ready to start shooting and Mal was my favorite Paramount director. A few months later he directed me in one of the best silent pictures I ever made, entitled *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter*.

This picture boosted me up to the top rungs of the Hollywood ladder with such male stars as Rudolph Valentino, John Gilbert, John Barrymore, Tommy Meighan, William Haines, and Emil Jannings.

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## 20: *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter*

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**L**ASKY decided to make *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter* my first top-starring part; Florence Vidor was cast as the duchess. I knew it was the greatest part I had ever had and I was in there hitting the line like a sophomore trying for his college letter. I even suggested to the art department the sort of sets that should be used in the picture. Edward Steichen, the famous photographer, whom I had met during my flight from Paramount, had shot many interiors of the Regina Hotel in Paris. Since most of the picture took place in an old-fashioned Paris hotel, I supplied the art director with a set of these Steichen photographs. He practically duplicated the lobby of the Regina as well as the rooms I had occupied in the hotel.

I must have been the busiest actor in Hollywood in those days. I stuck my nose into everything—the writing, the costuming, the production. I wanted to be sure that I landed about five smash pictures in a row and I worked like a dog. They couldn't get me on the sets too early or keep me too late if it would help make the pictures better. I was the original eager beaver.

After my return from Paris until the end of that year I did five pictures, which left very little time for anything else. When we were shooting, I had to get up at six-thirty in order to be at the studio by eight; we never quit work until six P.M., and often it was much later. In order to keep up this pace I had to get to bed by ten o'clock every night. Somehow I missed all those wild Hollywood parties that people like to believe movie actors enjoy;

in fact, if there were any, I never even got invited. About the only social activity in which my wife and I indulged was an occasional dinner with friends like Monta Bell and his wife and Eddie Sutherland and his first wife, Marjorie Daw. By this time Eddie had left Chaplin to become a director at Paramount and had already directed *Coming Through*, starring his uncle, Tommy Meighan, and *He's a Prince*, with Ray Griffith.

The part I played in *The Grand Duchess* was that of a wealthy man who falls in love with an impoverished grand duchess. But she is very proud and very proper, so there is simply no way I can meet her because we have no friends in common. Finally in desperation I bribe a waiter to let me take her dinner to her. The scene in which I served the dinner called for me to do it very clumsily. I was supposed to know nothing about serving and finally was to spill soup down her neck. We rehearsed this scene over and over again. I had a terrible time trying to pretend that I didn't know how to be a waiter. After all, when you have been the manager of a high-class restaurant, you don't know the wrong way to serve dinner; you only know the right way. If a cowboy is put on a horse and told to act as though he doesn't know how to ride, he still looks good on that horse.

Mal got a little annoyed with me because we couldn't get the scene shot. He finally said, "Look, Adolphe, don't you understand? You are supposed to look like a bad waiter, not a good one!"

"I know that," I told him, "but when I worked in my father's restaurant, he wouldn't tolerate a bad waiter, and I have a suspicion his spirit is right on this set watching every move I make."

When we finished shooting the *Grand Duchess and the Waiter*, Mal and I were sure we had a film in the can that would do us both good, but neither of us stayed with the picture to see it through the cutting room. Mal was assigned at once to another directorial chore, and I went to work on a picture Monta Bell had been preparing for me—*The King on Main Street*.

Since most of this picture had a New York City background, Lasky decided to shoot it at the Long Island studios. Monta, my-



In *Bella Donna*, 1922, Pola Negri's first American picture, I played the husband who somehow managed to get killed so that everything could end happily.



Is *Matrimony a Failure?* 1921, was a farce comedy directed by James Cruze and starring T. Roy Barnes,



In *Evening Clothes*, 1927, I wore a beard for one reel and pretended to be a lout from the French provinces. But very soon I shaved the beard and cut capers in Paris. The young lady is Virginia Valli.



In the Michael Arlen story, *The Ace of Cads*, 1926, I was at the height of my dress-suit career. This was the picture that Mrs. Bernard Shaw liked so well that she wished to meet its impeccably dressed star.

self, Greta Nissen, and Bessie Love all went to New York at the company's expense. The rest of the cast was from Broadway and included Oscar Shaw, a musical-comedy favorite, and Carlotta Monterey, who later married Eugene O'Neill, the playwright.

*The King* was my first picture in which color photography was used. It was made by the Prizma process, as I remember, and was not so good. The final scene of the picture was shot by this process. The picture suddenly changed from black and white to color. The grass was a dismal green and everything was sort of fuzzy around the edges. It was just an experiment to see how the fans would like it. They thought it was terrible.

We did things in that picture that today seem fantastic because of the technical improvements that have since been achieved in picture making. There was a sequence in which the king went to Coney Island and had the time of his life going on all the rides. Most of these scenes were actually shot at Coney Island. In order to show me riding in a roller coaster Monta and James Wong Howe, the cameraman, strapped themselves and a camera in the first car of the coaster while the other actors and I sat in the second and third cars with the camera trained on us. We had to shoot the scene several times, and I got very fed up with roller-coaster riding; but Monta and the cameraman were still more unhappy because they had to ride backwards.

Today, in order to make a scene like that the cameraman would fasten his camera to the rear of a roller coaster and make one trip, shooting the moving background. Then the film would be brought to Hollywood and projected onto a transparent screen in the studio. In front of the screen the actors would sit in a stationary roller coaster while a camera photographed both them and the moving background. The scene could be shot 100 times, if necessary, and no one would ever have taken a ride in a roller coaster except the cameraman who made the process shot.

Another scene in the picture that we shot without faking was one in which the king's ship arrived in New York Harbor. The king was supposed to be a great admirer of beautiful women.

When the ship came into the harbor, one of his retinue hurried up to him and exclaimed that he had just seen the most beautiful woman in the world. The king immediately dashed to the other side of the ship to see this woman, who turned out to be the Statue of Liberty—a feeble joke, perhaps, but people liked it. In order to make this scene we went out in a tug and boarded an ocean liner that was actually arriving. Since there was time for only one take, everything had to be well rehearsed in advance. As the ship sailed past the famous statue, we shot the scene.

One day, as we were making the final scene of *The King*, Walter Wanger came out to the Long Island studio with a very long face.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“We ran *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter* last night,” he told me, “and it’s terrible. It doesn’t make any sense.”

I couldn’t believe my ears; I knew that we had made a good picture. So we went to the projection room and ran the film again, and Wanger was right. Something had happened to our picture. It had been cut to the bone by some idiot in the cutting department. All the wonderful scenes that Mal and I had labored over were gone. That is the sort of thing that can happen in the picture business. I raised such a row that I could be heard in Times Square.

“I’m taking that picture back to Hollywood,” I shouted. “I’m going to put it back the way we shot it or I will quit!”

There was nothing else that could be done for the picture was hopeless the way it was; so I caught the Twentieth Century while Monta stayed in New York to finish cutting *The King*.

When I got back to the studio, Ralph Block, a writer and associate producer, went to work with me to try to put *The Grand Duchess* back in shape. We worked days and nights reassembling the picture, and we also had to shoot one added scene. When you cut and assemble a picture, you have to view all the film that has been shot—not once but dozens of times. The story soon begins to bore you stiff and you can’t tell whether a scene

is funny or not. I began to be worried about the picture and the studio was worried, too. Meanwhile *The King on Main Street* was released as my first starring picture. It was such a hit that I was afraid *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter* would seem very second rate by comparison. By the time we had a master print ready, I was exhausted by work and worry and was practically ready for a hospital.

Meanwhile my marriage was on the rocks. Actually my wife and I had been on the verge of separation for some time, but in those days everybody in Hollywood was afraid of divorce publicity. The papers pilloried Hollywood stars whenever they became involved in domestic or any other kind of trouble. Will Hays had made us very conscious of the fact that movie actors could have no more privacy than goldfish and that we had to avoid certain kinds of publicity or the reformers would pounce on us. But one night my career and my domestic problems met head on. I decided I couldn't take it any more, so next morning I packed my clothes, piled my bags in my car, and drove to the studio. I went direct to the studio manager and told him the situation.

"I'm going to New York," I explained. "If you want me to make pictures, they will have to be made there."

Fortunately for me Paramount had its Long Island studios in full operation and so it didn't matter where I worked. I caught a train that same day.

My fears about *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter* had been needless. When it was released, it was even bigger than *The King*. It was listed among the best pictures of the year and was among the best performances I had ever given.

At that point I didn't have to go to Mr. Lasky to ask for more money and fewer pictures. He sent for me.

"We want to tear up your old contract," he said, "and give you a starring contract. What do you want?"

Those were the sweetest words I had ever heard from a producer. I decided to make the most of them.



"The responsibilities of being a star are very great," I replied without even smiling. "I will have to have refusal of parts, only four pictures a year, five thousand a week the first year, six thousand the second, and seventy-five hundred the third."

To my amazement Lasky was agreeable and those were the terms on which we signed. I had finally arrived at the top. Of course, I had developed insomnia, a Hollywood ulcer, and my first gray hairs, and my wife was suing me for divorce, but at last I was a real star.

## 21: *Hollywood Golf*

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**P**RACTICALLY every Sunday for the past twenty-five years I have gone out into the fields and woods to commune with nature, to perform certain rituals and incantations, and to meet with friends as well as enemies in mutual idolatry of a fantastic game called golf.

Recently, in preparation for these pious rites, I had Sunday morning breakfast with a group of golf fanatics in the tertiary or incurable stage. They included Bing (Groaner) Crosby, Clark (Muscles) Gable, Randy (The Sheriff) Scott, and several others whose combined fervor, if applied to one mighty swat at a golf ball, would create the largest divot since the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Randy Scott possesses a superlative golf swing as well as one of the finest appetites since the Pliocene Age. That morning he was indulging it to the limit. The waiter brought him a stack of wheat cakes that reached almost to his chin; on top of this he placed a side order of two poached eggs and four strips of bacon, then prepared to attack this mammoth meal.

We all stared at the concoction in combined horror and amazement. Clark Gable, who is no mean trencherman himself, exclaimed, "You're not going to eat that!"

"Certainly I'm going to eat it," Randy replied.

"That just demonstrates," commented Crosby, "two extremes in human taste. If you'd stick a feather in it, Menjou would wear it for a hat!"

Crosby will say anything for a laugh, a habit he acquired from associating with Bob Hope. This strangely mistaken belief on his

part that I wear outlandish clothes on the golf course stems from the day on which I appeared at the Bel-Air Country Club wearing an Alpine outfit and equipped for mountain climbing. That was merely in protest against the hazards of my home golf course, which seems to have been laid out as an obstacle course for mountain goats. But regardless of the crevices, cloud-covered crags, deep hidden gullies, and impenetrable thickets on the Bel-Air golf course—features that necessitate a 300-foot suspension bridge, five lengthy tunnels, an elevator, and a compass in order to negotiate the eighteen holes—it is one of the most beautiful golf courses in the world, and I love it.

As a golfer I am what is known as a “pigeon” or “soft touch.” I always pay off in the elevator on the way from the eighteenth green to the locker room, a practice that makes me one of the most popular opponents in Hollywood golf circles.

I was introduced to golf in the early 1920's by the late Harry Leon Wilson, one of America's foremost humorists and author of *Ruggles of Red Gap* and many other popular books. We played at Griffith Park when that course still had skinned greens made of sand. They were as hard and as smooth as a pool table. If you sneezed in the presence of the ball, it would roll clear off the green. I must have had a score of 140 that first round, and although my game has improved since then, I am still a dub's dub. I have never broken 80 in all those years. I keep on hoping and praying, and once after prolonged invocation and several miracles I managed to score an 82. I have taken lessons from such notables as Bobby Jones, Horton Smith, Jimmy Thompson, and Byron Nelson, as well as a horde of lesser pros. All I asked of them was that they make me a consistent ten-handicap player and I would be happy. But they all gave up in despair.

The first club I ever joined was Lakeside Golf Club, but later I switched to Bel-Air Country Club. Between these two clubs you can get a quorum of the Screen Actor's Guild at any time by calling the roll in their respective cardrooms and bars.

One of the first great truths I learned about golf is that it brings out the worst and the best in a man all the way back to his great-great-grandfathers, including their dreams. Every secret in a man's family tree from the time his ancestors swung from one will be revealed on the golf course.

I understand that golf varies in different parts of the country—not the rules, which come from St. Andrews in Scotland via the United States Golf Association, but the ethics or etiquette of the game. Although I have played golf in the East, as well as in England, Scotland, and France, I can only speak with authority on Hollywood golf. That is a subject on which I am a recognized pundit and can speak freely.

To begin with, a game of golf in Hollywood circles is often won or lost before a ball is hit off the first tee. While you are still limbering up with a beautiful practice swing—and all practice swings are beautiful—you inquire casually of your opponent what his handicap is. If your man answers, "I haven't got one," that is very bad. I got caught that way once and I have never forgotten.

"About what score will you shoot?" I inquired, feeling sorry for this duffer without a handicap.

"I haven't any idea. I haven't played a game of golf in years."

This sounded too good to be true. Here was a fellow who hadn't hit the ball in years and he wanted to play for money.

"Well," I responded, scratching the palm of one hand, "what do you think you will shoot?"

"Maybe a ninety or a ninety-five," he replied.

"Then we can play even," I assured him.

"Fine."

He teed up his ball and as soon as he hit it I knew that I was a dead duck. Although he hadn't played a game of golf in years, he had once had a five-stroke handicap, so he shot a 78 at me. Very costly. I am hoping that someday I will get another crack at the gentleman so that I can get my fifty dollars back.

Clark Gable got it even worse than that one day. He played a fellow who lacked a handicap but who shot a 72. He practically took Gable's teeth.

Anyway, after you have argued the subject of handicaps with the three other golfers in your foursome and have agreed on the size of your bets, the trouble has only begun. For in Hollywood golf you need eyes in the back of your head, especially if you are playing with a producer or an agent. I used to play with Jesse Lasky and Adolph Zukor every Saturday. There were no ethics in that game at all. They thought golf was like the motion-picture business where anything went but murder and—according to rumors some people even got away with that.

Whenever Zukor got into the bushes, I had to watch very closely and inquire when he returned to the fairway just how many strokes he had taken.

"Just one," he would say. "Those others were practice swings."

We had a foursome that consisted of Lasky, Zukor, and his brother-in-law Al Kaufman. We played for twenty-five dollars Nassau, which means a total of seventy-five dollars. Then we always made a few side bets. I used to pluck those pigeons for plenty, but it was never very profitable because I had to put Zukor's caddie on a steady salary so that he would keep me informed as to the exact number of strokes Zukor and Lasky took when I wasn't looking. Of course, they weren't cheating; they were just doing what comes naturally in Hollywood golf.

Along the fairway there are various types of golfers you have to watch. There is the fellow who picks up his ball to identify it—so he says—and then replaces it in a much better lie. There is also the chap who steps directly behind his ball with an innocent, faraway look, as though he is sizing up the distance to the green. After this maneuver he has a brassie lie, when before he would have had to hack at his ball with a five iron.

Mr. H. N. Swanson, Hollywood's leading agent for authors, employs the above stratagems with amazing skill and *savoir-faire*. Mr. Swanson, who swings at a golf ball as though it were a rattle-

snake about to strike, will also confound you with the rule book if you don't watch out. One time, after hitting three balls out of bounds, he dropped his first ball in the fairway and said, "I elect to play my first ball for a one-stroke penalty, as provided in Section Four of the rule covering balls out of bounds." It sounded as though he were quoting direct from the book and he almost got away with it.

Then there are those Hollywood golfers who turn out to be foot experts and pocket experts whenever their balls land in the rough grass. The pocket expert is one who has a hole in his pocket. When he loses his ball, he drops another through the hole in his pocket, and this second ball rolls down his trouser leg, whereupon he suddenly finds it, thereby saving himself a two-stroke penalty. The foot expert, upon finding his ball in a bad spot, stares fixedly off at the clouds—in the same way that a magician distracts the attention of his audience while palming a card—then manipulates the ball with his toe until he has teed it up on a tuft of grass.

Once William Wellman, the director, was playing golf with an agent whom he suspected of being a foot expert. When this fellow landed in the woods, Wellman sneaked up behind a tree and saw him giving his ball the toe and moving it out of an unplayable lie. Willie was so mad that he stepped out from behind the tree and kicked his opponent as hard as he could in the seat of the pants. "Let that be a lesson," he warned him. They finished the game without any further footwork.

There is also a special type of Hollywood golfer that I call the tantalizer or nervous-fidgets golfer. This fellow does not win by the direct method; he uses the negative system. When you are preparing to hit a very important shot to the green, the tantalizer will cough or sneeze on your backswing. Then, when you miss the ball, he will apologize.

"Hope I didn't bother you, old fellow, but I just couldn't hold back that sneeze."

On the green this golfer is likely to stand in his opponent's line as he putts and wiggle one toe just enough to distract his at-

tention. The best one I ever knew used to wear squeaky shoes. When everything was quiet, and just as I started to hit the ball, I would hear this fellow start to walk behind me. Voom! I would blow the shot.

One of the best tantalizers was Jim Oviatt, who owned the largest haberdashery in Los Angeles. I was one of his best customers both on and off the golf course. We used to play regularly with Dave Butler, director of such hits as *Sunny Side Up* and *The Road to Morocco*. Oviatt would bring a piece of buckram from his tailor shop and carry it in his bag. Just as I would lean over to putt, he would tear the buckram. R-r-r-rip! It sounded as though I had just split the seat of my pants. Or he would light his pipe with a big kitchen match exactly at the moment I was addressing the ball. Scr-r-ratch on the sole of his shoe! It was all in fun, but for fifty dollars Nassau it was expensive amusement.

From the fairway there is always a good chance that your opponent will knock his ball into a sand trap. Then you must beware; you cannot afford to be coy or bashful, but must step up and watch him hit the ball out of the trap. Because he may be a sand hog, and if he is, the ball will sail out of the trap and onto the green in the wink of an eye. A sand hog is a man who scrapes away the sand on his backswing, thus leaving the ball exposed so that he can easily knock it on the green. If he is caught at it, he will claim it was a mistake and that he grounded his club by accident. You cannot have mercy on this prevaricator. You must charge him one stroke penalty or live to regret it.

Now we approach the green where many of the most flagrant shenanigans in Hollywood golf are pulled off. We have what are known as "fingernail men." They are the fellows who mark their positions on the green with their index fingernails, making strange cabalistic signs on the grass that only they can detect. When it comes time for one of these golfers to replace his ball, it always turns out to be 2 feet closer to the hole than you thought it was. If my opponent persists in the fingernail routine, I always hand him a penny with which to mark his ball. He seldom returns the

penny at the end of the game, and I have lost at least \$100 that way; but I have saved thousands in missed putts.

The worst menace on the putting green is the fellow who concedes himself 5-foot putts. This was a favorite habit of Mr. Zukor's. He would miss his first putt by 4 or 5 feet, then reach for his ball and ease it toward the hole with a backhand stroke far more efficient than his forehand. One time on the eighteenth hole at Lakeside all bets hung in the balance. Zukor missed his first putt and started to give his second that casual scrape into the hole.

"Hold it!" I shouted. "You have conceded yourself seventeen putts today, but this one you have to knock into the hole."

He was very indignant. He tried to tell me that gentlemen always concede short putts.

"All week I have to act the part of a gentleman," I told him. "But on Saturday I relax; I am pretending to be a roughneck, so sink the putt."

He fussed and fiddled over the ball and finally froze up and missed the putt.

One of the high lights of my golfing career was a game I played with the Prince of Wales in 1931. I had gone to England to make two pictures. My friend Major E. D. Medcalfe, Equerry to the prince, called me on the phone and asked if I'd like to have lunch on Sunday at Fort Belvedere, the Prince's country place, and later play golf with His Highness. I accepted with alacrity but explained that I had no golf clubs with me.

"That's all right," Medcalfe assured me. "We'll fix you up with a set of clubs."

On Sunday Medcalfe arrived in a big Rolls and we motored out about 20 miles to Fort Belvedere. After luncheon Medcalfe, the Prince, and I drove to Sunningdale Golf Club. There I was introduced to Ernie Sales, who was the professional at Sunningdale. He showed me a selection of clubs that he himself had made, and I picked out those I needed and a golf bag. It was



quite a chilly day, so I was given a pair of English golf mittens, which are thin across the palms and fingers but heavy wool over the backs of the hands. I had never seen any like them before.

On the first tee the Prince said, "What shall it be—a quid a hole?"

A quid is about five dollars, which meant that this was not going to be a game of marbles. My Hollywood training at once put me on the alert.

"Fine," I said. "But of course I am playing with strange clubs, and besides I have not touched a club in several months. By the way, what is your handicap, Your Highness?"

I think he said his handicap was ten, so I said, "In that case you will have to give me about nine strokes."

"Righto," said His Highness.

I was disappointed. After all, I was used to a little bickering and screaming in Hollywood, but that is not good form in English golf.

I wanted very badly to beat the Prince. He was the heir to the throne, and I thought that it would be fun someday to say, "I took the King of England's shirt in a golf game one time—got him for five quid."

But like all Englishmen the Prince had probably been weaned on an old rusty putter, so he played a hell of a game and I was lucky to come in all even with him.

After the game was over I discovered, to my surprise, that the clubs that I had borrowed were actually a present from the Prince.

I'll never forget the first time I played golf with George Murphy, the Irish Fred Astaire. When we came to the twelfth hole at Lakeside, the match was all even. This hole must have been designed by a mad sadist, for the green is flanked on one side by a trap that is harder to escape from than Alcatraz. Of course I knocked my ball into this trap.

Taking my sand wedge, I descended into this man-made valley of death and started blasting. I kept hitting at the ball until Murphy was hysterical. The head greenkeeper was watching a short distance away. All he could see was that somebody was apparently shoveling sand out of that trap, so he came running over, very worried, thinking one of his men had gone berserk.

It finally took me thirty-four shots to get the ball in the hole. But I wouldn't quit. That is one thing about my game that can be depended on; I never pick up. I will stay there and keep knocking at the ball as long as it is daylight.

One time I was playing with George Murphy and Carol Tracy, Spencer's brother, at Lakeside. Tracy conceded Murphy a 3-foot putt, and before I could protest Murphy knocked the ball toward the cup but missed it.

"How many?" I inquired.

"Six," replied Murphy.

"It may be a six with Tracy," I told him, "but with me it is a seven."

Murphy let out a roar like a bull elephant in pain, but no man can outshout me. If I do say so myself, I have a voice that can be heard from any golf course in southern California to Catalina on a clear day.

"The object of the game," I bellowed back, "is to get the ball in the hole—not close to it. If that were the case, I would have a handicap of eight instead of eighteen!"

On the next tee Bob Hope and three of his twenty-two gag men were just teeing off. Bob had his Great Dane dog along with him. It was a large, fierce-looking animal, but apparently it had a strain of mongrel in it. At the first outcry of pain from Murphy, the dog's tail went between its legs; and when it heard my bellicose reply, it lit out across country running like a frightened gazelle. It took Bob half an hour to catch the mutt and bring it back, 150 pounds of quivering psychoneurosis.

I discovered early in my golfing career that it is a very expen-

sive game, for the original cost of a club membership and a set of clubs is small compared to the upkeep.

The cost of caddies is one expensive item. The caddie is the fellow who carries your bag and gives you bad advice on how to play every shot. If you have a regular caddie, he becomes a very expensive luxury; he rules your game with a rod of iron and expects to be paid in large figures regardless of the outcome of the game. If you are not careful, your caddie becomes a dependent, but one you cannot declare in your income tax return. If the caddie gets drunk and is thrown into jail, he will call up and ask you to bail him out; if his wife is going to have a baby, he may want some help in defraying the expenses. There are several insane millionaires among Hollywood golfers who slip their caddies ten dollars for toting their bags around the course. As a result, anybody in the moving-picture business who hands out less is considered an exploiter of the working classes and may receive a dirty look from his caddie.

But there is one more item of expense that few neophyte golfers ever consider. That is insurance. In Hollywood you cannot play golf without insurance. There are too many club throwers exhibiting their temperaments. After all, Hollywood is full of temperament, and there is no better place to see it displayed than on the golf course. Hollywood golfers *must* have insurance against club throwers.

Johnny Weissmuller is as fine a club thrower as will ever be encountered. He once whizzed a club past my head so fast it sounded like a P-38 in a power dive. Next day I took out insurance. Richard Arlen and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., are also two famous club throwers. Roy Bargey, the orchestra leader, is very proficient in the art, too. He has probably developed special wrist muscles from waving a baton. His specialty is putters, and he always throws them toward the tops of trees. Two of his putters are still resting in the tops of very high trees on the Bel-Air course.

But the greatest club thrower of all time is Bob Crosby, Bing's

brother. He holds the long-distance club-throwing record from a standing start. He is also the only golfer I have ever heard of who threw a club after missing a practice swing.

In the idiotic days of 1928 everybody in Hollywood seemed to be getting rich in the stock market, and everybody took up golf because he thought he had to practice up on how to loaf, since very soon nobody would ever have to work again. There were fellows playing golf then who have never again touched a club since that sad day in 1929 when they got margin calls as they walked off the eighteenth green.

One of the Hollywood institutions of those dizzy days was the Divot Diggers, a club whose members were devoted passionately to gambling away their money at golf and stud poker. Virtually every Hollywood personality belonged to the Divot Diggers. Every member was given a special nickname—one designed to be distasteful to its recipient. My name was "Froggy," which was mild in comparison with some of the names, such as "The Dago," "The Spook," and "The Wop."

I am sure I have had more nicknames than any man who ever lived. People call me "Duke," "Menjie," "Monjie," and "Dolph." In Culver I was always "Frenchie." In Cornell I was known as "Ade" or "Ad." During my early days in pictures my roommate Ned Hay called me "Joe." I have a few old friends who knew me when I used my middle name, and they often call me "Jean." But to all the members of the old Divot Diggers I am still known as "Froggy."

We used to meet at various clubs once a week, play a round of golf, eat dinner, and then play poker until daylight. During those poker sessions there was usually much ribbing about the golf games that had been played during the day. I was one of the worst golfers in the club. I think my handicap at that time was twenty-four. The only other member in my class was William K. Howard, director of the famous picture *The Thundering Herd*. Somebody got the idea that it would be very funny to needle us into a grudge match, so they began to work on us. I was in-

formed that Howard thought I was a pigeon and that he would like to get me into a golf game and take my shirt. Somebody else worked on Howard and convinced him that I was sharpening up my game for the express purpose of trimming him in a match. Finally one of us went for the bait and challenged the other to a game.

During the following week I spent every afternoon at Lakeside practicing, and at night I would go to the golf range and take lessons. I discovered that Howard was doing the same thing at Brentwood Country Club.

The match was played at a regular meeting of the Divot Diggers at Riviera Country Club, which is a difficult course for dubs because it is very long. We were so serious about the game that we would not play as part of a foursome; we went out as a twosome. By the time we started off on the first tee there must have been more money bet on that match than on the Los Angeles Open. I had a big bet with Bill and had made bets on myself with a dozen others in the club. Eddie Mannix of Metro could not get there that day, but he is supposed to have rushed \$500 by motorcycle messenger out to Riviera to bet on me. I had about \$1,500 bet on myself and I was so nervous that I could hardly tee up the ball for my first drive.

It was a dingdong match all the way but strictly a battle of mediocrity. If one of us got a bogey on a hole, he was a sure winner. We had both studied up on the rules and we watched each other like a couple of strange dogs; we made sure that every shot was played according to the book.

When we finally reached the eighteenth tee, we were all even. Word had preceded us that the match was close, so we had a very sizable gallery for that last hole.

The eighteenth at Riviera can try the soul of even the best golfer. The ball has to be driven over a steep hill about 90 feet high. If it does not clear this hill, it winds up in the rough with a grove of trees between it and the green. I managed to hit my ball just barely to the top of the hill, but Bill sliced his drive into the



In *A Social Celebrity*, 1925, I was a barber with social aspirations. Chester Conklin was my father and disapproved of the whole idea. He turned out to be right, but not until I had worn a lot of clothes.





*The Sorrows of Satan* was produced in 1926 at Paramount's Long Island studio. I always call this one "The Sorrows of Zukor." Here we see me playing the part of Satan, surrounded by a lot of sinner bait. The young man going to the devil on the couch is Ricardo Cortez.

rough. When we got to his ball, we found that it had settled into a very deep clump of grass resembling a large bird's nest.

I said, "Bill, my heart goes out to you. That is strictly a Japanese hanging-basket lie. In order to hit that ball you would have to be a contortionist with three legs. But to show you what a sport I am, if you concede the match, I will settle our bet for ninety-five cents on the dollar."

Bill was so mad that you could have lit a cigarette on the back of his neck. He grabbed a niblick and knocked the ball right onto the fairway. Byron Nelson couldn't have recovered from that lie, but Bill did. I was so unnerved that I missed my next shot and we battled down the fairway, scuffing and dubbing as we went, until we both had taken five blows to reach the green.

At this point it was Bill's first putt, and he missed. As I got ready to putt I was shaking like a bartender mixing a Bacardi cocktail. I studied the contours of the green and decided that it was a straight putt. Then I stabbed at the ball and knocked it about a foot off line. But to my amazement the ball curved around and dropped into the cup, making me the winner of the Howard-Menjou golf championship with a total of 108 strokes!

Hollywood has had some very good golfers and some very bad ones. One of the worst who ever swung a golf club was John Barrymore. One would think that a man who was such a wonderful mimic would have been able to swing a golf club like a pro, but he couldn't. He was a menace. One never knew where to stand when he got ready to hit the ball. He would cut divots as big as bomb craters. When the greenkeeper saw Barrymore going out to play, tears would come into his eyes and he would go out and get drunk, because he knew it would take three weeks to get the course back in shape.

When Maurice Chevalier first came to Paramount, we became very close friends because I could talk French with him. When I discovered that he liked to play golf, we made a date to play at Riviera. Chevalier was a typical Frenchman, a keen student of the dollar; we argued for fifteen minutes about handicaps and



how much we would bet. Finally he teed up his ball and started to hit it. He missed by 6 inches, and I thought he had just taken a practice swing. But then he proceeded to fan the ball nine consecutive times. I couldn't believe my eyes. There is no way to handicap a man who whiffs at the ball nine times in a row. Finally he became so exasperated he picked up the ball and threw it off the first tee. From then on Mr. Chevalier was my pigeon. I took great pains to keep him to myself. He was a bonanza!

Another of Hollywood's most notable golfers was the late W. C. Fields. When Bill went out on the golf course, he always took a bottle with him and had a nip on every tee. It didn't matter how hot the day was, he always had his bottle along. He never seemed to get intoxicated, although from the amount he drank during a golf game it doesn't seem possible that he could have known where he was or what he was doing. Sometimes I suspected that the bottle actually contained iced tea or he would never have been able to finish the game.

One time while playing an important match, and after an uphill battle, he reached the fourteenth hole all even. As he took his bottle out to bolster himself for the job ahead, he dropped it; the bottle landed on a tee marker and broke. A tragic expression crossed Bill's face; one would have thought that he was battling with rapiers and had just been disarmed. He wiped his brow with a trembling hand, teed up, and scuffed the ball about 100 yards. On his third shot he dubbed one into a dry river bed and finally lost the hole by three strokes. In desperation Bill grabbed his bag of clubs and ordered the caddie to run to the clubhouse and procure another bottle from his locker. By the time the caddie returned, Bill had just lost another hole and was two down. He seized the pint of bourbon from the caddie, moved to a soft grassy spot, opened the bottle, and took a large jolt. Then he placed the bottle carefully in his pocket, stepped up, and belted the ball 200 yards straight down the fairway. After two more sizable jolts he finished with a score of 4-5-3 to win one up—proving that equilibrium is not important in the game of golf.

For a long time I have thought about publishing a paper like the Daily Racing Form, but instead of giving the dope on horses it would give a day-by-day account of how the golfers are doing in Hollywood. It would be a very handy thing for inveterate linksmen. If you had a date to play golf with Dennis O'Keefe, for instance, and wanted to know how heavy to make your bets on the first tee, my Daily Golfing Form would give the fluctuations of his handicap for the past six months and how he went the last four times out—whom he beat and by how many holes, or vice versa. If O'Keefe had recently won from golfers like Gable, Crosby, Scott, and Reggie Owen, you would have to be cautious because they are very tough customers. But if he had lost to players like Bob Montgomery or George Murphy, then you could bet your bank roll because you would know that he was off form and in a bad slump.

Publication of such a paper would be a very easy task for me because I have studied most of our Hollywood golfers for years and I know their styles and forms better than any handicapper knows the horses.

Bing Crosby's handicap is four. He is best on a fast course, and he likes to go the full distance. In fact, if he has lost any money after eighteen holes, he will try to double the bets and play another eighteen.

Randy Scott is the philosophical or according-to-Byron-Nelson type of golfer. He is a scratch-handicap man and a slow starter, but is very hard to beat when he is in training and has had a full meal.

Bob Montgomery has a nineteen-stroke handicap. He is my type. I always like an opponent with a pocketful of money and a fast backswing; Bob has plenty of cash and the fastest backswing in Hollywood.

Hoagy Carmichael is the greatest slow-motion golfer in the business. His handicap is ten, based on the number of minutes he takes per shot. One time he went out alone to play eighteen holes and was not seen again for two days. One never

makes a date to play golf with Carmichael unless he is on a long layoff.

Clark Gable's handicap is nine. He is strictly the muscular type of golfer. Once Clark was my partner in a golf game, and we reached the eighteenth hole all even with our opponents. Clark hit a drive 265 yards down the middle; then he hit a niblick shot to the green. All he had left was a 15-foot putt; so, with biceps bulging he stepped up to the ball, knocked it 20 feet past the cup, and lost the hole for us. The fellow is obsessed with the idea that golf is a test of strength!

For many years the grand old man of golf in Hollywood has been Joseph Cawthorne, famous musical-comedy star who appeared in the original cast of Victor Herbert's *The Fortune Teller*. Cawthorne has given up the sport in recent years but he used to play regularly, equipped with a collection of mechanical devices and contraptions that he had invented to simplify the game. In order not to have to stoop over and pick up the ball after he had putted out he had a special suction cup fastened on the end of his putter with which he retrieved it. And he had another gadget that eliminated bending over to tee up. This was a magnet attached by a string to an old-fashioned cone-shaped tee. He used to drop the tee to the ground and shove it around with his driver until he had it in place. Then, with his special putter he lowered the ball onto the tee. After these preliminaries he was ready to go, and he would take his driver and sock the ball. At that point all that remained was to retrieve his tee, which he did easily by means of the magnet to which it was attached.

The first time I ever played with Joe was after we had worked together in a picture called *The Human Side*. We made a date to meet at Lakeside. I arrived early and went out to play three or four warm-up holes. I teed up the ball and took a crack at it—a very mediocre shot that sounded just as though I had hit a felt hat with a wet cigar.

"I'm a little rusty," I explained to the caddie as we started after my ball.

"Yes, sir," said the caddie with a patient expression. "You forgot to keep your head down."

"Did you ever caddie for Mr. Cawthorne?" I inquired, disregarding his veiled criticism.

"Oh yes. Lots of times."

"What's his handicap?"

"Oh, he hasn't any handicap."

As I thought this over I selected another club, approached my ball cautiously, and after several preliminary flourishes took a cut at it. There was a sickening noise, as though I had hit a sackful of mashed potatoes. The ball skittered along the ground for a few yards and the caddie sighed softly.

"No handicap, eh?" I said, pursuing both the ball and the topic of Mr. Cawthorne's game. "Does he hit the ball well?"

"Oh, terrible, terrible!"

"How terrible?"

"He can't hit his hat with a broom!"

"What do you think he will shoot?"

"Who knows? He could do just as well using a baked apple instead of a ball."

This sounded very gratifying, so I took another club and another lusty swing at the ball and had another nasty accident. The caddie groaned as though suffering from some secret sorrow.

Not wishing to inquire into his personal problems, I persisted in my quest for more information about Mr. Cawthorne's golf game. "What," I asked, "is Mr. Cawthorne's usual score? Around ninety, perhaps?"

"Oh no, much worse than that!"

"A hundred?"

"Oh no, much worse than that!"

"Very interesting," I said. "He wants to play me for ten dollars a hole. How many strokes do you think I should give him?"

"You!" exclaimed the caddie. "Oh, Mr. Menjou, you couldn't give him any strokes at all!"

## 22: *The Sorrows of Satan*

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**S**HORTLY after Paramount gave me my starring contract I developed an acute case of Hollywood's favorite ailment—ulcers. A couple of eminent specialists poked, stethoscoped, X-rayed, and fluoroscoped me but failed to diagnose or cure my pains.

It wasn't their fault; I happened to have a very bashful ulcer. It was the retiring or hide-and-seek type. Several years later, when X-ray equipment was improved, they found it and explained to me that my trouble was hypertension.

In my early days of stardom I had plenty of that, for I was trying to handle all my business affairs without assistance. I had no agent, not even a secretary. Every day was a jumble of appointments, phone calls, and social engagements combined with the strain of picture making.

Finally, I realized that I had to have a manager or I would soon be cutting out paper dolls. But it was no easy matter to find the right person. I needed someone who could fight my battles with Lasky, tactfully remove misty-eyed spinsters from my doorstep, explain to star-struck high-school girls that I was not a candidate for their affections, threaten persistent stock salesmen with violence, answer fan mail, impersonate me over the telephone, be my constant shadow, work unconscionable hours, and still love me like a brother even when I had the stomach-ache. Since I had a brother who was at that time manager of the Manhattan advertising office of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, it was a simple matter to get him on the phone and offer him the job. The moment he accepted I dropped all my problems into his broad lap.

Hank hustled around and found us a furnished apartment on

Fifty-fourth Street at half the rent I would have had to pay, and in a week or two he had my scrambled affairs running smoothly. Once more I began to have an appetite, and soon I was eating without regret, sleeping like a baby, and beginning to enjoy life a great deal more.

About this time I finished *A Social Celebrity*, which Mal St. Clair had directed. To celebrate the occasion we went to Jaekel's and ordered fur-lined overcoats with fur collars priced at \$750 each. This was a sort of wish fulfillment for me. From the time I had been a small boy I had always remembered that the big stars who dined at my father's restaurants in Cleveland had always worn fur-lined overcoats. Now that my name was in lights on Broadway I felt that it was definitely time to blossom forth in a fur-lined overcoat with a big fur collar.

The coats Mal and I purchased were magnificent; they were productions; they must have weighed twenty pounds and would have served for an Arctic expedition. Although we had ordered the coats to face the rigors of New York weather, the day on which they were finally finished was quite warm. Nevertheless, when we stopped at Jaekel's to try on the coats, I decided to wear mine. After all, I had waited quite a number of years to own a fur-lined overcoat, and now that I had it I wanted to wear it regardless of the weather.

Not to be outdone, Mal wore his, too. As we started up Fifth Avenue we began to perspire freely and to attract attention. First people would turn to see what madmen were wearing fur coats on a day as balmy as spring; then they would recognize me.

"It's Menjou—it's Adolphe Menjoul" we heard them stage-whispering.

"Satisfied customers," I told Mal. "They've just seen Menjou in costume."

We couldn't have attracted more stares if we had walked up the Avenue in bathing suits. In Hollywood, where people were used to queer sights, nobody would have paid much attention to us; but on Fifth Avenue we were a sensation.

We had a date for luncheon at a speak-easy—a place called Moriarity's. By the time we arrived there the coats weighed a ton. We wanted to get rid of them but we hesitated to entrust them to the checkroom, so we went into a huddle to discuss the situation. After all, this place was operating illegally; at any moment it was likely to be raided by prohibition agents. If that happened, our coats might be in serious jeopardy.

"You're an authority on clothes," said Mal. "Is it proper to wear a fur-lined overcoat into a speak-easy dining room?"

"Only," I assured him, "when it is not covered by insurance." So we took our coats with us to the dining room just in case we needed to make a fast getaway.

Clothes have always had a wonderful influence on my physical well-being as well as my self-assurance. All I have to do to make me feel like a new and younger man is to order three new suits of clothes. My fur-lined overcoat gave me such a glow of health that very shortly after acquiring it I was able to enjoy the hazards of a Gargantuan studio cocktail party without a single twinge of pain.

Paramount tossed this magnificent party in true Hollywood style, and when a studio pays for a big cocktail party, it expects to get value received. In this case it was publicizing my next picture and hoped to get free literary advice from a famous Armenian author. It probably got plenty of publicity, but nobody ever got anything free from an Armenian author.

I was the publicized host and Michael Arlen was the guest of honor. The studio had just purchased Arlen's *The Ace of Cads* as a vehicle for me. It had wanted him to write the scenario for the picture, but he was booked for passage back to England and already had a pocketful of moving-picture money, so he refused to accept the assignment. Somebody around the studio got the bright idea that if Arlen were wine and dine he could be induced to discuss his story and might, in an unguarded moment, disclose valuable information as to just how he, the master storyteller, visualized his saga on the screen.

Publicity departments tend to believe their own publicity, and since by that time they had hailed me as a sort of Escoffier of Hollywood, I was consulted as to the arrangements for the party. This gave me an excellent opportunity to spend Paramount's money with a lavish hand—a task that afforded me much pleasure.

Because it was expensive, I chose the Colony Restaurant as the only fitting place in which to entertain a celebrity of Arlen's stature. Then Hank and I put our heads together and outlined a buffet menu suitable for a reception to a royal potentate. Only the most expensive delicacies met with my approval—pheasant, squab, pressed duck, imported Westphalian ham, Russian caviar, *pâte de foie gras* with truffles, various cheeses cured in wine, out-of-season fruits, and several cases of Scotch and Canadian whisky as well as vintage champagne. The latter were smuggled in from Canada, at great pains, by someone in the publicity department.

I have never seen guests enjoy a party more than they enjoyed that one. They ate and drank as though preparing for a prolonged famine. There has never been so much caviar consumed by the proletariat.

Everybody who was invited—and plenty who weren't—arrived early and stayed late. That is, all but Michael Arlen. He was conspicuous by his tardiness. The producer of my coming picture, the director, and five writers, with notebooks in their pockets, all waited anxiously for the guest of honor to appear. They planned to grab him, pour wine into him, feed him, then crowd him into a corner and pump him for ideas. But unfortunately, by the time he arrived, the writers, the director, and the producer were all *hors de combat*. Besides, Arlen merely stopped in to say that he could not stay, for his ship was sailing in just half an hour. So he nibbled at a *canapé*, sipped a bit of champagne, and dashed. No one ever got a word out of him about *The Ace of Cads*. Aside from that it was a very successful party.

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six is really an excellent average, but once you become a star, you naturally want every picture to be a box-office smash, for your continued stardom depends on those box-office grosses. No matter how much the critics and the public may like your individual performance, if your pictures begin to slip at the box office, Hollywood grows very disinterested in you.

I wanted another picture like *The Grand Duchess and the Waiter* and *The King on Main Street*, which were sophisticated comedies. But instead the studio offered me the lead in a piece of *smörgåsbord* called *The Sorrows of Satan*, a novel by Marie Corelli. The director was to be D. W. Griffith.

Griffith wanted me to play the part of the devil, who appears on earth in the guise of a wealthy and sophisticated man and tempts a struggling young artist into debasing his art for the sake of material things. I asked to see the shooting script because this sounded like pretty ordinary stuff to me. I was told that Griffith never shot from a script, so all I could read was the book. I read the book and didn't like it.

The devil has always been a great actor's role in every play in which he has ever appeared, from *Faustus* to *The Black Crook*. Certainly it is a part that any actor should enjoy playing, but those months I spent making *The Sorrows of Satan* were the unhappiest I have ever experienced in this business I love.

As I have already said, there were no scripts for the actors. We met every morning in a hall above Keen's Chop House, where Mr. Griffith would explain what we were to do, and then we would rehearse. Interminable hours were spent rehearsing and changing very dull and uninteresting scenes. In the afternoons we went to the studio and shot and reshot. I suspected very quickly that we had a "turkey," for I had an infallible barometer—my stomach. It began aching worse than ever before.

"*The Sorrows of Satan*," I told Hank, "is going to turn out to be *The Sorrows of Zukor*."

But the studio executives were all sure it would be a great picture. After all, they had a best seller for a story; they had

Griffith directing; and they had four stars in the cast—Menjou, Ricardo Cortez, Carol Dempster, and Lya de Putti. How could a combination like that miss? This was strictly motion-picture thinking. If vintage champagne, twelve-year-old Scotch, and fine bonded bourbon are mixed, all you get is a headache, and that's what *The Sorrows of Satan* was.

Mr. Griffith started out with big ideas for a lot of supernatural scenes in the picture—scenes that depended on trick photography and special effects. His ideas were very exciting to talk about, but unfortunately they were technically ahead of their time. I was to make my first appearance during a big garden party. Thunder and lightning were to frighten the guests, and then the heavens were to part and I was to come zooming down from the sky with wings flapping and tail swishing. But I was supposed to be visible only to the audience. The actors couldn't see me until, in the twinkling of an eye and a blinding lightning flash, my devil's trappings had vanished and been replaced by white tie and tails. What a scene! There he stands, the suave and distinguished Menjou, and only the audience knows that actually he is old Satan himself! That sort of hocus-pocus makes great selling talk at a story conference but plenty of grief when it comes time to shoot it.

The costume department made a devil's costume for me with mechanical wings that flapped in the breeze. When I got dressed up in it, I felt more foolish than I ever had in my life. The stage crew attached a couple of piano wires to a harness that went under my costume; then I was hoisted into the flies and the shooting started. We shot for about four days while I dangled from wires and developed saddlesores on my ribs from being jerked and hauled through the air.

*The Sorrows of Satan* took about six months to shoot. But when it was finally assembled in the cutting room, all the supernatural stuff was out. For when the sky was supposed to open up and the devil come winging down to earth, it just looked phony and ludicrous. And when I was supposed to walk through doors

and stone walls, the trick photography was not in the least convincing.

This information came to me from a friend in the cutting room. I was relieved to know that people would not see me acting at the end of a piano wire, but I was still so fed up with *The Sorrows of Satan* that I refused to go to the Broadway opening.

Instead I had a brutal stomach-ache that night and a severe case of the jitters worrying about what the reviews would say. About eleven o'clock the next morning Hank came bustling into my room and woke me. He had all the papers under his arm and a smile a mile wide on his face.

"Cheer up!" he shouted. "The reviews are terrific!"

"You mean it turned out to be a good picture?" I demanded.

"Oh no," he responded, gaily. "The picture stinks, but your notices are sensational. Listen to this from the *Telegram*: 'Praise be, we have Adolphe Menjou. His interpretation of Satan last evening was a thing of joy . . . !'" And he went on to read a long paragraph full of flattering adjectives. He was beaming like a proud mother when he looked up. "We'd better go down tonight and see it."

"Not a chance," I told him. "I can't be as good as that review, and I don't want to be disillusioned."

So I never did see *The Sorrows of Satan*.

## 23: *Fine Feathers*

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SILENT pictures reached their peak during the years 1925 to 1928. Some of the hits were *The Big Parade*, with John Gilbert; *Beau Geste*, with Ronald Colman; *The Sea Beast*, starring John Barrymore; *What Price Glory?* with Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe; *Seventh Heaven*, with Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell; and *It*, starring Clara Bow.

During those years I was a star in twelve silent pictures in which I portrayed practically the same character that had been created for me by Chaplin in *A Woman of Paris*. Such typing is one of Hollywood's great faults. The studios and the producers hold desperately to formulas—not only for stories but also for actors. I became standardized—like Theda Bara's vamp, Chaplin's tramp, William S. Hart's two-gun sheriff, or Mack Sennett's cops. My identifying traits were the roving eye, the cynical smile, and the immaculate dress suit.

It was the job of the Paramount publicity department to keep the public aware of my special qualifications for stardom, and they did their damndest. In thousands of photographs, cartoons, and caricatures printed in newspapers and magazines I saw myself depicted as a sort of supersophisticate. There were also hundreds of articles and interviews with titles like "The Sophisticated Mr. Menjou," "Menjou, the Ladies' Man," "Menjou, the Gentle Cynic," "Menjou, the Parisien." In English, French, Spanish, German, and a dozen other languages Menjou the man was analyzed and dissected, but he always turned out to be that fellow I portrayed on the screen.

Nor were the publicity boys satisfied to have me merely a gay

sophisticate. I also became an author and philosopher, giving out with profound inanities in ghostwritten articles. I think the most awe-inspiring and omniscient of these was "Love, Women, and Marriage," by Adolphe Menjou, in which I cribbed a bit from Shakespeare, Schopenhauer, Plato, Freud, and several other excellent sources. I often wonder whether people read those things and if so why the insurance rate on actors is not higher.

But the aspect of my movie character that the publicity men exploited with their best adjectives was my wardrobe. That was something concrete and real and easy to write about. They didn't have to cudgel their brains or read up on psychoanalysis to write stories about clothes; besides, it was very salable material. They gave their imaginations full play and used my by-line with reckless abandon. I found my name signed to many variations of an article entitled "How to Spend Money for Clothes," in which I discovered that my annual budget for wardrobe was \$14,500—a slightly inflated figure, but no doubt an impressive one to the fans. This bulging budget included \$50 for garters and \$100 for suspenders.

I found, however, that I was very democratic about the matter of clothes. I itemized a list of expenditures whereby most men could dress presentably for only \$500 a year and could hold up their socks for \$3—no allowance for holding up their trousers; plebeians could use pieces of rope, I presume. For the benefit of junior executives, customers' men, and the like, I explained that a man might get by without looking too shabby on a budget of \$2,500, which included four suits, two overcoats, \$50 worth of pajamas and \$8 worth of garters, but not even a safety pin to hold up his pants.

Another favorite of the press department was the article in which I created my own list of best-dressed men; and, of course, I was also an authority on beautiful women. But I was as variable as a weather vane. One day I would declare that Cleveland had the best-dressed men and the most beautiful women in the world. A month later it might be London or Dallas, Texas.

An actor gets very confused about his hobbies, his favorite foods, his ideal woman, and even his salary if he reads his studio press releases. But confusion is normalcy in Hollywood, so it is hardly noticed. And sometimes I think the illusions created by the publicity departments are more successful than those the studios put on the screen. Paramount's press agents might have found better words, but they could not have turned out more of them to prove that I was the king of men about town, the connoisseur of beautiful women, and the czar of male fashions.

Looking back, I know that I was partly to blame for the reputation I developed at that time as a clotheshorse. My father was something of a dude and he taught me to dress to the limit of my pocketbook. He liked to point out that no man could help the shape of his profile, but that the cut of his trousers and the fit of his coat were something he himself could control, and that often others judged him entirely by his appearance. In the acting business this is especially true. Even when an actor is broke, hungry, and out of a job, he must put on a bold front. When he goes in search of a job, he must trim his frayed cuffs with an old razor blade, carefully press his best suit, and shine his own shoes in order to appear well dressed and prosperous.

After I had been in Hollywood a few months, I realized that I needed a new wardrobe. The casting directors knew every suit I owned, so I thought it would be a good idea to show them a change of scenery. Jack Pickford and Owen Moore, who had thrown away more clothes than I had ever owned, were close friends of mine, so I asked their advice regarding tailors in Los Angeles. They both suggested a small shop owned by a man named Eddie Schmidt. Not without ulterior motive I asked Owen if he would go with me when I went to see Mr. Schmidt. Since Owen was a well-known star, I knew that he would be a good front man for me.

Eddie Schmidt's shop was located on the second floor of a building in downtown Los Angeles. I was not impressed until I met Mr. Schmidt. He was a short, dapper little man who wore



his clothes with the air of an ambassador. He had a white carnation in his buttonhole and was wearing white spats. I sized him up as a tailor who loved fine clothes, and when Owen introduced us, I could see Schmidt giving me and my clothes an appraising glance.

Tailors are only human; they enjoy making clothes for men who will display them well. Because of my early training at Culver I have always carried myself erectly, with my shoulders thrown back; consequently a coat always drapes well on me. Tailors also like to fit a man with long legs. Although I am about average height, my legs are quite long in comparison to my body. An artist might find me out of proportion, but a tailor is pleased by the long line of my trousers. Schmidt took this all in at a glance and I knew that he was impressed.

"Mr. Schmidt," I said, giving him my best smile. "I find myself in a very difficult position. I am an actor and I need clothes, for clothes are an actor's tools. I have very good prospects, if I can replenish my wardrobe, but at the moment I have very little money. In other words, we cannot do business unless you give me credit."

Schmidt hesitated only a moment as he cast a rather critical glance at one of my lapels. "I think that can be arranged, Mr. Menjou."

"Good. I'll need six suits to start."

I think six suits were more than Schmidt had bargained for, but he didn't bat an eyelash. I selected the materials and he called for Bergman, his cutter. The suits were \$125 each, so he gambled \$750 on me. Mr. Schmidt is now dead, but his firm is operated by his son and is one of the foremost in America.

My loyalty to Eddie Schmidt after I became a star and my insistence that he was one of the great creative tailors of the world led to rumors around Hollywood that I owned an interest in his tailor shop or that I got a special discount on the clothes I bought there. That was not true. During the time I was receiving so much publicity as one of the world's best-dressed men my patronage



For many years at Lakeside Golf Club my regular foursome included the late Frank Craven, actor, playwright, director, Guy Kibbee, character actor, and Oliver Hardy of the team of Laurel and Hardy—very tough fellows in a golf game.



Discussing the next scene of *A Star Is Born*, 1936, with William Wellman, one of Hollywood's best directors. Seated on the arm of the chair is the star, Janet Gaynor, now the wife of Adrian, the famous *couturier*.

was valuable to a tailor shop, but I never asked for a price concession from any tailor. It would have been very foolish economy if I had, because a star cannot buy bargains in clothes. On the screen the slightest flaw in the cut of a suit is exaggerated. Sometimes as many as eight or ten fittings and alterations are necessary to get a satisfactory fit. If I had bought my clothes at a special price, I would never have had the nerve to keep going back for additional fittings. As it was I never hesitated to go back, even a year later, if I was dissatisfied with a suit.

During the shooting of *A Social Celebrity* a representative for Fashion Park Clothes offered me a job as style consultant. All I had to do was to have duplicates of my suits made and shipped to the factory in Rochester, New York, where they would copy them in ready-made suits. The yearly retainer was very juicy, so I accepted the offer.

Shortly after that I made a trip to England for the purpose of getting acquainted with London's great tailors and picking up new ideas in the designing of clothes. In fact, I took my new job so seriously that eventually I had clothes made by most of the great tailors in the world. That was why my wardrobe grew to such tremendous proportions. I tried all the best tailors in New York and in London, too. I had clothes made for me by Sholte, Anderson and Sheppard, Pope and Bradley, Leslie and Roberts, Plaidell and Smith, Birkenshaw and Knights, Poole, Sandon, the famous makers of breeches and riding clothes, and several others. I also tried the Italian tailor Caraceni, Caraterro in Madrid, and Knize of Berlin, as well as Larson and Pile in Paris.

I became as enthusiastic about collecting clothes as I had once been about stamp collecting. Whenever I met a well-dressed man, I'd start talking clothes with him. On one trip to England the Earl of Portarlington told me about the firm of P. and J. Haggart in Scotland, who would manufacture tweeds to order. After that I couldn't be happy until I had made a trip to Scotland and had ordered special material for tweed suits. Then I learned about Izod and Lillywhites, the two great makers of sweaters and knit-

wear, and of course I had to have sweaters made to my own design.

Major E. D. Medcalfe, Equerry to the then Prince of Wales, explained to me that the really smart dressers of England thought that one firm of tailors turned out superior trousers while another was better at waistcoats and a third was expert at jackets. I was also told that the Prince would purchase a piece of material and have three different tailor shops work on the three different parts of a suit. This seemed to me to be carrying the art of dressing to a preposterous extreme, even for a Prince. I also heard that he had one bootmaker who made the upper part of his shoes while another attached the soles. I never quite believed that story; probably somebody was trying to pull my leg, as they say in England. When I finally met the Prince, I was tempted to inquire if it were true but lacked the nerve.

In delving into the habits of the British well-dressed man, I discovered that the old tailoring firms of London think the world revolves around the problem of proper attire for men. One time I went to Anderson and Sheppard to order a dress suit. With great ceremony they brought out a bolt of cloth that they said they reserved only for their very best customers.

"What is so special about this bolt?" I inquired.

"It is the same piece of material from which His Highness, the Prince, recently had a dress suit made."

I couldn't pass up anything like that, so I ordered the suit. I will say it is the most durable dress suit I've ever owned.

As soon as I became a Paramount star, I began getting offers to endorse various products at fancy prices. I thought this was bad publicity, so I turned down all these offers. But one day Hank and I were walking along Seventh Avenue in Los Angeles when we happened to glance into the window of a cheap haberdashery. There was my picture, life-size, surrounded by a display of ready-tied bow ties. They were the kind that are sewed on the end of

an elastic band. To my horror they were advertised as "Adolphe Menjou Ties." The price was twenty-five cents!

Hank claims I turned white, and I know he had to restrain me from going in and personally removing that window display. My lawyer tracked the manufacturer to his lair and discovered that he was not only putting out bow ties under my name but was also manufacturing a misbegotten garment that he called an "Adolphe Menjou Shirt." We threw the book at the fellow and collected damages.

Although I had dozens of suits made by London and Continental tailors, I found that Eddie Schmidt was as fine a creative tailor as any of them. Most of my experiments in clothing were made with the assistance of the elder Schmidt.

One of the first things we tried was taking the buckram out of the lining of coats so that they could be draped with a little fullness over the chest and the shoulder blades. It took a long time to make this style popular, but now one seldom sees anything but a draped coat. We also narrowed the sleeves of coats and eliminated the creases in them. Then we spread the top buttons on double-breasted suits so that the shoulder line was broadened; and we tried a number of other innovations that have become standard in men's clothes.

I'm afraid I used to make a nuisance of myself at Eddie Schmidt's shop. I kept telling him that he couldn't afford to take customers who didn't look well in their clothes. After all, the most important assets of a tailor are well-dressed customers.

There was one friend of mine in particular whom I had sent to Schmidt who always looked terrible. His sleeves were invariably too long and his coats were too snug. I discovered that this fellow's wife always went with him for his fittings and bossed the job! Schmidt and his cutter were two of the finest designers in the business, but my friend's wife was telling them how to make men's clothes. I am wholeheartedly in favor of equal rights for women, but not in a men's tailoring shop.

The most important man in a tailoring shop is the cutter. He is the one who is responsible for giving the customer a proper fit and for designing clothes that suit him. Although England is famous for its tailors, many of the best cutters are of other nationalities. I have known wonderful cutters who were Swedish, Italian, Spanish, even Greek. But no matter what their nationalities may be, cutters are much alike in many respects. They always seem to have the weight of the world resting on their shoulders, and a good many of them are heavy drinkers. I suppose they are disillusioned artists, embittered by the problem of trying to hide the strange and misplaced contours of the average male figure.

The first time I met a cutter who liked the bottle too well was in London. This chap was giving me a fitting, and I suspected that he was a bit under the influence but had no idea just how much he had consumed.

"This won't do at all," I said, inspecting myself in the mirror. "I don't like the way the coat hangs."

"Seems a bit of orlright to me, sir."

"It's too loose," I insisted.

"Hi wouldn't sy so, sir."

"I tell you it won't do; it fits like Mahatma Gandhi's bed sheet."

The cutter heaved a big sigh and said, "Hit 'angs like a bloomin' 'orse blanket, it does." With that he folded up on the floor, out like a light.

The fitting was delayed for a few days, but the fellow finally made me a wonderful coat, even if it did have an aura of Scotch whisky about it.

Only a short time ago I discovered that for several years my wardrobe did double duty. I lived in Hollywood at the time and patronized a small cleaning shop near my home. When I was working in a picture, my dresser would sometimes take five or six suits to the cleaner in one day. The young fellow who ran this cleaning establishment wondered why many of these suits came only once. He learned that those that never came back simply

hung in a closet, unworn. This was too much. He kept thinking about all those suits just hanging in a closet, doing no one any good. It became an obsession with him, for he was fond of fine clothes himself but couldn't afford them. Finally the temptation became too great. He tried on one of my suits and it fitted him perfectly. So that night he wore the suit to see his best girl and made a very favorable impression.

After that the young lady was dazzled by the array of suits that her swain displayed. He was by far the best-dressed fellow she had ever known, and in no time at all she was engaged to him. I understand that the young man is now operating a successful business in Long Beach and has an extensive wardrobe of his own.

A great many movie plots have revolved around the complications that consequently develop when one man wears another man's clothes. But the strangest incident of this sort that I ever heard about actually happened to George Murphy. One day he was laying out his clothes for a new picture. His dinner jacket was enclosed in a paper wrapper just as it had come from the cleaner a few days before. When he tore off the paper covering, he thought the jacket looked a bit unfamiliar and considerably too large. Examination proved that it was not his jacket. He inspected the tailor's label inside the pocket and took down the name. Then he went to the telephone and called his cleaner.

"There's been a mistake," he explained. "You've sent me a tuxedo belonging to a Mr. J. Ditmar Fussbuckle. Probably you've sent my jacket to Mr. Fussbuckle."

"We'll check and call you right back," the cleaner promised.

But the cleaner did not call back. George became impatient. He was starting a picture in a day or two and he needed the dinner jacket. He called the cleaner again.

"What about my dinner jacket?"

"We're very sorry, Mr. Murphy, but we're having a little trouble locating it. You see, Mr. Fussbuckle died a few days ago and nobody at his house seems to be able to find your suit."



A horrible thought flashed into George's mind. "Has he been buried yet?" he demanded.

"Yesterday."

George groaned and hung up. But he had to have a dinner jacket. He picked up the phone and made a few more calls. Finally he learned the name of the Fussbuckle undertaker and called him.

"Was Mr. Fussbuckle buried in a tuxedo?" he asked, fearing to hear the answer.

The undertaker was averse to revealing just what Mr. Fussbuckle had worn to his own funeral; but after a few cautious questions and a short delay for consultation with his partner, he finally admitted that the late Mr. Fussbuckle had been buried in a tuxedo.

"Dig him up," commanded George. "That's my tuxedo he's wearing, and I need it."

"I'm sorry, sir," said the undertaker, "but that wouldn't do any good. You see, the garment was so small for Mr. Fussbuckle that we took a pair of scissors and split it up the back."

## 24: *Came the Revolution*

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**T**ALKING pictures created panic in Hollywood. The big companies weren't ready for them and neither were the actors. In a few short months Warner Brothers became the leader in the industry because it was first to make films talk. And overnight the biggest stars were suddenly has-beens because they couldn't talk.

All over town the frightening question was: Can you talk? Nobody knew for certain. Only that little microphone could give the answer. For the first time movie actors were conscious of their vocal cords. What did they sound like? The only way they could find out was by a voice test.

That was when the sound technicians took over the town. They were czars for a while. They ruled the roost and everybody salaamed when one walked by. Then the stage actors and the stage directors and the playwrights began to arrive from New York. The studio heads rushed to New York and put anybody under contract who made a living with words instead of gestures.

Talking became a very mysterious thing in Hollywood. You'd have thought that nobody out here had ever talked. The sound technicians locked the doors of the stages and conducted their strange rites in great secrecy. If you did happen to get on a stage where you could watch them, they frightened you to death by standing in front of the microphone and muttering "Mississippi—Mississippi—Mississippi" to a fellow in a sound booth who would listen and then shake his head glumly. After that the Mississippi man would move the microphone, have the stage crew hang up velvet curtains on the other side of the stage, and then once more start muttering incantations into the mike. This mysterious procedure

went on for a long time until finally some director got smart and said, "Oh, nuts!" Then he shoved the head technician out of the way and shot a picture without the aid of mumbo jumbo.

I was working in New York in 1926 when Warner's first sound picture was shown and went to see it with Walter Wanger. The picture was *Don Juan*, starring John Barrymore. There was no talking in the picture, only a synchronized musical score, and in one place, during a duel, the clashing of the swords could be heard. But accompanying the picture was a short in which Will Hays made a speech introducing the new experiment and congratulating Warner Brothers on its accomplishment.

Later I saw Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer*, in which he spoke a few lines and actually sang. That was the picture that started the trouble.

In 1926 the big companies had scoffed at the idea of making pictures with sound and dialogue because sound pictures were expensive to make and no theaters were equipped to show them. But in 1927 *The Jazz Singer* saved Warner Brothers from bankruptcy and created queues in front of theaters for the first time in several years.

Despite the crowds that jammed in to see *The Jazz Singer*, Fox was the only other studio to install sound equipment at that time. The others delayed. It was six months after *The Jazz Singer* opened before the rest of the industry realized that the movie fans wanted no more silent pictures and the mad scramble to please them started.

At that time I was in Paris honeymooning with my second wife, Kathryn Carver, who had been my leading lady in two of my best pictures. When we returned to Hollywood, every studio in town was installing sound.

At first the studios never intended to turn all production into talking pictures. Silent pictures were still to be the staple product. So while Paramount prepared to make a few talking pictures as novelties, I did *His Private Life* and *Marquis Preferred* without dialogue but with musical scores and some sound effects. Then I

started a picture with Lubitsch directing, but about that time the real panic started. Work on all silent pictures was stopped and the entire Paramount production was switched to talking pictures.

When this happened, I suddenly realized that I was in a very precarious position. I was a silent actor, so nobody thought I could act in talkies. The biggest Paramount stars were being replaced by stars from the stage; they knew how to talk. Tommy Meighan, who had been the highest-paid actor in the business, was finished; Gloria Swanson, the highest-paid actress, was on her way out. The studio had paid off Emil Jannings, the wonderful German actor, and he was on his way back to Germany. Maurice Chevalier was the new hope of Paramount; he not only spoke English but also sang.

I was in the last year of my contract at that time. My salary was \$7,500 a week. I knew that unless I proved I could talk before my contract expired, I would be a dead pigeon. I went after every Paramount big shot in Hollywood demanding a voice test. Finally it was arranged. George Cukor, a stage director, had been brought out from New York, and he suggested a scene from *Grounds for Divorce*, a play in which Ina Claire and the late Philip Merivale had starred. Cukor directed me in the test.

The movable boom, which today allows the mike to follow the actor wherever he moves, had not yet been invented. Instead several mikes were hung over the stage or concealed in flowerpots and other places. Every time you read a line, you had to be sure that you were close to one of these mikes. Every movement you made had to be planned so that you would arrive at another mike for your next line of dialogue.

The strangeness of this new technique, combined with the problem of remembering lines and the difficulty of working with a strange director, scared me stiff. I knew instinctively that I was pretty bad. Next day I hurried to the studio to learn the results of my test. Everybody at Paramount was pessimistic; nobody would say yes and nobody would say no. Several days elapsed

before I was allowed even to look at myself. Finally, however, I saw the test.

What a painful experience that was! I came out of the projection room a chastened man. Only one thought consoled me: the test proved that I could talk; there was nothing wrong with my voice; I didn't sound like a mug or a chorus boy. So I knew there was still hope for me if Paramount would let me make a picture.

But that was something of a hurdle, for Paramount was busy making pictures with people who had had stage experience. The pictures weren't very good, but they talked, and that was all the fans wanted. I sat around drawing my salary for quite a while before somebody decided that I was an expensive item of overhead and that, good or bad, I ought to draw at the box office.

David Selznick was then assistant to General Manager B. P. Schulberg. He called me in and handed me a screen play entitled *Fashions in Love*. It was an adaptation of *The Concert*, an old Ditrichstein play that had been purchased for Emil Jannings.

"If you like this script, we'll do it," David told me. "If not, we'll have to pay you off for the remainder of your contract. Read it and let us know by Monday."

That was Friday. I was back in Selznick's office on Saturday morning. "This suits me," I told him, "provided I can have a real picture director and not one of these new boys from Broadway."

I asked them to get Victor Schertzinger, who had given me my first role in Hollywood. He had once been a musical director, and since this was a picture about a concert pianist, I thought he would be a good man to do the job. Victor read the script and liked it, so we went into production early in 1929.

At that time the method of making sound pictures was very crude. We shot with three cameras enclosed in soundproof booths. The three cameras shot three different angles simultaneously, since there was no way of synchronizing separate shots to a single sound recording.

The scenes in which I was supposed to play the piano were all recorded at the same time the pictures were shot. I played a

dummy piano, and off scene a very fine concert pianist actually played while I synchronized my movements to the music. Victor wrote a song for the picture called *Delphine* that I actually sang in the picture. They had not yet learned how to dub in substitute singing voices.

I played my part with a French accent, and occasionally I would speak French. But whenever I did there was always some action to indicate what I was saying so that the audience would not be confused. I might say to my butler, "*Albert, le chapeau,*" and Albert would hand me my hat, or, "*Albert, la valise,*" and the action would show that I was asking for my valise. It was really a French lesson right off page one of an elementary grammar.

We finished the picture only a month or so before the expiration date of my contract. I kept expecting the studio to call me and make some sort of an offer, but all I got was silence. My contract expired on May 24, 1929, and still no word. I thought the studio was waiting to see how the critics liked the new picture. My wife and I packed and went to New York for the opening on June 29 at the Paramount Theater.

The reviews were excellent. The critics seemed amazed and delighted to discover that I could talk, not only in one language but in two. Even such conservative papers as the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* agreed that I was one silent star that need not worry about continuing in talkies.

But Paramount was still silent. It was buying stage stars very cheaply, so it had decided that if it waited long enough, it could get me back at a reduced salary. I decided to take a trip to France and loaf for a while. The market was climbing every day, and I was getting rich anyway, so why worry about a job in the movies?

My wife and I sailed on the S.S. *Ile de France*, which was a very lucky thing for me, because it resulted in the most lucrative picture contract I ever made. On the first day out of New York I met two Frenchmen on the ship—Emil Nathan and Marco de Gastine. They had just arranged for the shipment of complete sound equipment from the United States and were going to pro-

duce the first talking picture ever made in France. All they needed was a star! And by the greatest good fortune I was a star who could speak French as well as English.

I suggested that we try something that had never been done—that we make a picture with two negatives, one in French and the other in English. The two French picture producers were delighted with my novel suggestion. They had never thought of such a thing. Two casts—one English and one French—but only one star, one set of scenery, one director, and one camera crew. They would reap a fortune!

I made sure, at least, that I would get plenty. My terms were \$125,000 for each picture and 50 per cent of the profits. They didn't like the terms, but they needed a star, so they agreed. I released the terms of the contract to the American press as soon as the papers were signed; I wanted Paramount to know that I was doing much better elsewhere.

France always has a peculiar effect on me. As soon as I land at Cherbourg, the ghosts of all my French ancestors seem to take me in hand, and I am more of a Frenchman than an American. I become as volatile and as voluble as a native, and I start to think like a Frenchman, too. Fate must have sent me to France in the summer of 1929 so that my ancestors could give me a little good advice.

I had plenty of leisure time when we first arrived in Paris, for my French producers had to get their sound equipment installed and have a script written before we could start shooting. Every morning I used to walk down the street a few blocks from my apartment, sit in the board room of the Victor Hugo brokerage office, and watch what was happening to the stock market. I had most of my money tied up in it, so naturally I was interested in watching it multiply. But sitting there among those Frenchmen I began to feel just the way many of them were feeling. The French can be very pessimistic, and many of them were shaking their heads over the way the market was going. I had a block of

National City Bank and a big profit on it; one of the French brokers advised me to sell. I went to a banker friend of mine and asked his opinion. He said he thought the stock would go to \$1,000 a share. It was then selling at about \$500.

But all the ghosts of my French forebears were whispering over my shoulder, "Get out, Adolphe. The world is going crazy. Get out before it is too late."

Then I began to have stomach-aches. I suffered so much that I finally went to the American Hospital in Neuilly for an examination.

"I may have to perform a gastroenterostomy," the doctor said.

I was frightened stiff. I sent a cablegram to my brother Henry in New York telling him to sell every share of stock I owned. I didn't want to go on that operating table with my money tied up in the stock market.

Next day a cable arrived from Henry, a very long cable saying that he absolutely would not sell. He had talked to all the smart fellows and they had said that the market was going much higher.

But I was in France thinking like a Frenchman and he was in New York listening to a bunch of optimists. I cabled back: **SELL EVERYTHING OR I WILL HOLD YOU PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE.**

Henry sold. Then I called the doctor in and asked him how much the operation was going to cost me.

"Is one hundred dollars satisfactory?" he inquired.

"One hundred dollars!" I shouted. "Don't give me any hundred-dollar operation. I want the best. Give me a five-hundred-dollar operation!"

In October I was still recuperating, taking short walks to the brokerage office, where I would sit and watch the prices go up and wonder whether I had been wrong to sell.

Then came October 29. I'll never forget it. I was in the board room of Hurst, Lilienthal and Company when stocks were dropping ten, twenty, and fifty points at a crack. I have never seen such a madhouse. Paper millionaires who had suddenly become



paupers were tearing their hair, screaming, and fainting in board rooms all over Paris.

I thought to myself that if I had not sold out when I did, this thing would surely have killed me. For I would have become as excited and hysterical as all these others and in my weakened condition I would probably have burst my seams.

My appendix had been removed, but my unruly ulcer was still with me. However, the rest and the diet that followed the operation improved my health, and by January, 1930, I was ready to start shooting *Mon Gosse de Père*, which translated freely means *My Adolescent Father*. It was one of the first of the stories about the father who behaves like a perennial youth and the son who is sedate and serious.

For a director we finally secured Jean de Limur, who had been one of the technical experts on the Chaplin picture and who had just finished shooting *The Letter* in New York, with Jeanne Eagels and Herbert Marshall.

Two complete casts were used—one for the French version and the other for the English. My two leading ladies were Alice Cocea, a Rumanian girl who spoke French and who was very popular with the French fans, and Elissa Landi, who had been brought over from London to play in the English cast.

We shot the picture in six weeks, but what a six weeks! I never worked so hard on a picture in my life, for actually in that time I was making two pictures, memorizing the same part in two languages, playing the same scenes twice. M. Nathan and his partners really got their money's worth. But of course I was one of the partners.

During the making of that picture I discovered why it usually takes six months to shoot a movie in France. There is too much handshaking. With the French, handshaking is almost as necessary as breathing. I would arrive on the set at nine A.M. sharp and immediately the handshaking would start. This was all done according to protocol. First M. Pathé, one of the owners of the studio, would rush up and shake my hand—not a strong, vigorous

handshake, but a mere suggestion of one, just a light pressing of the fingers. Next would come M. Emil Nathan, then M. Bernard Nathan, then M. Marco de Gastine. With the stockholders out of the way M. Gargour, the studio manager, would appear for his handshake, then M. de Limur, the director. He would be followed by M. Kanturek, M. Colas, and M. Asselin, the three cameramen. After them would come M. Solaire, the electrician, and M. Patinou, the head carpenter, followed by the sound men, the grips, the actors, and the extras. Half the morning was wasted in handshaking. They were not even handshakes; they just threw a cold mackerel at me.

After a week or so of that I decided, as majority stockholder in the enterprise, that we would have to stop the social amenities and get down to the business of shooting a picture. I had Director de Limur announce that M. Menjou begged to be excused from handshaking because he had developed a slight case of eczema of the cuticle and was afraid he might transmit it to other members of the company.

I discovered after two weeks that although I was supposed to be a fifty-fifty partner in the picture, I was dealing with the shrewdest, sharpest character in the business. It is said that the three most cunning men in business are a Ningpo Chinaman, a Turk from Pera, and a Rumanian from Bucharest. M. Nathan must have been a combination of all three. I got so that after shaking hands with him I would count my fingers.

My contract called for five payments of \$25,000 each—the first upon signing, the second on the day we started shooting, the third two weeks later, the fourth two weeks after that, and the last payment upon completion of the picture. We were to make three pictures under those terms.

I received my first payment after signing the contract. On the day we started shooting I received my second. It was a draft on a New York bank. Next morning I went to the bank to deposit it. The cashier explained, "You understand, M. Menjou, this will take about seven days to reach New York and then it will take

seven days coming back. There may be a few additional days' delay, so it will take between two and three weeks for the check to clear." I realized then that I was not getting my money on the day the contract called for but a couple of weeks later.

Two weeks elapsed. The first check had not yet cleared, and it was time for me to get my third payment. It failed to appear. I called the office to find out where it was.

"You will have it tomorrow," I was told. "M. Nathan is out of town."

I was beginning to get suspicious. The next day arrived, but no check. I called again.

"We made a mistake in making out the check. You will have it tomorrow."

I was getting very suspicious. But after all, it was my own company, so I waited. On the third day M. Nathan was still out of town and still no check appeared.

"I'm sorry," I told de Limur, "but you will have to shoot around me. My next scene is part of the plot. I can't shoot it until I get my money."

On the fourth day M. Nathan arrived in person at eleven o'clock with my check. I took it to the bank and cabled it to New York. I wanted to be sure that it cleared before the picture was over.

Four weeks later the picture was finished. My fourth payment had come through on time, but my last payment was now due. I waited and waited. Then I called M. Nathan.

"We are still shooting additional scenes," he explained. "It may be a week or two before the picture is actually completed."

I knew then that M. Nathan finally had me. It could be six months before the picture was actually completed if they wanted to continue cutting and editing that long. They could even start exhibiting it and still bring it back to make changes. I was fed up with making pictures in France, with handshaking, and with fighting to get my money. I put on my hat and went to see M. Nathan.



This is a scene from *Hi Diddle Diddle*, 1943, in which I costarred with Dennis O'Keefe, Martha Scott, and Billie Burke shortly after returning from a six-month USO tour of England, North Africa, and Sicily.



In *King of the Turf*, 1938, I played the sort of part I like best—no white tie and tails and no silk hat or



One of my favorite roles was that of the criminal lawyer in the satirical *Roxie Hart*, 1941, starring Ginger Rogers.

"I will make you a proposition," I told him. "Give me my twenty-five thousand, tear up my contract for two more pictures, and I will give you back my fifty per cent of the profits."

M. Nathan very quickly wrote out a check, and we tore up the contract. I was never so happy in my life, for I was homesick for Hollywood. A week later my wife and I were on the *S. S. Paris* heading back to the United States.

## 25: *The Front Page*

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**D**URING the eight months I was away Hollywood had changed. The entire population consisted of ex-millionaires; the golf courses were practically empty; Rolls Royce salesmen had switched to apples; and for *premières* at Grauman's Chinese only three searchlights instead of twenty were used. New stars from the stage had shot up overnight: Ann Harding, Sylvia Sydney, Fredric March, Chester Morris, Robert Montgomery, Edward G. Robinson, Louis Wolheim, Helen Hayes, Jimmy Cagney, and Leslie Howard. Some of the pictures in production were *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Anna Christie*, *The Big House*, *Little Caesar*, *Street Scene*, *Public Enemy*, and *Arrowsmith*.

Styles were changing—had already changed. The slick, sophisticated, dress-suited characters I had been playing were out of step with the depression that was closing in on the country. They were as phoney as a plugged nickel; the public knew it and the producers knew it. I wished I had never seen a dress suit.

My problem wasn't a financial one. I'd been one of the lucky ones; my cash was safe even though my career hung by a thread. But for me, who loved the movie business, the situation bordered on tragedy.

Only my knowledge of foreign languages kept me in the business. At that time the studios had not learned to make their stars speak other languages by the process known as dubbing. The best pictures were all remade in two or three languages with different casts. Probably I am the only actor who has ever made

pictures in four different languages: English, French, Spanish, and German. Although I've never tried, I could also make pictures in Italian.

Several years ago, in an effort to keep abreast of world events, I began to study Russian. I have, as a stand-in, Victor de Linsky, who was once a lieutenant in the Russian Cossacks and who received the Cross of St. George for bravery. Victor tells me I converse in Russian without an accent.

When I returned to Hollywood in 1930, the only jobs I could get at first were in foreign pictures. So I went to Paramount and made *Amore Audaz* in Spanish. It had originally been called *Slightly Scarlet* and the star in the English version was Clive Brooks, one of my very close friends. Then I did the same picture in French, under the title *L'Enigmatique M. Parks*, with Claudette Colbert, who was born in Paris and who speaks beautiful French.

After a month or so I finally made up my mind to go out and look for a job and not to wait for one to look for me. So I drove out to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and asked for an appointment with Irving Thalberg.

A few minutes later I was sitting in the gentleman's office discussing my career. "They say I am all washed up," I told him, "but I don't believe it. My name is known by every picture fan, and I'm just as good an actor as I ever was." I offered to cut my salary in half if Thalberg would put me under contract. He agreed immediately, but I was not given a starring contract. I was to be costarred.

Ironically enough, I was no sooner under contract to MGM than Paramount called to offer me a job in *Morocco*. It had just imported a new star from Germany, whose name was Marlene Dietrich, and wanted me to play the second man in the picture. Gary Cooper was to play the lead opposite Marlene.

Josef von Sternberg, who had been Marlene's director in Germany, directed the picture. He created wonderful moods, and his camera setups were beautiful. He was one of our best directors at that time.



Following *Morocco* I had a very unfortunate year at Metro. I played in *New Moon*, with Lawrence Tibbett and Grace Moore, their first motion picture. Then I did two foreign-language pictures, one in German and one in French. None of these helped me in the least. They were all dress-suit parts. I was stuck with that damned dress suit; I was in a rut. I could only hold tight and hope that dress suits would come back into style.

Dress suits did not come back; but, better still, I stumbled into a wonderful part that gave my career a shot in the arm. Having just finished playing the lead role in a picture adapted from Vincent Lawrence's stage play *Among the Married*, I was tired and ready for a rest; so my wife and I decided to go to Arrowhead for a week or so. We were on our way when I stopped at the Vine Street Brown Derby to get a package of cigarettes. As I stood at the cashier's desk, I heard someone call my name. It was Howard Hawks, the director, who was having lunch in a near-by booth.

"Lewis Milestone is trying to find you," he said. "Louis Wolheim has been taken seriously ill and has gone to the hospital. They want you to replace him in *The Front Page*."

"Me replace Wolheim!" I exclaimed. "Does Milestone think I'm as homely as Wolheim?"

But when I learned that he wanted me to play the part of Walter Burns, the tough, cynical managing editor, I headed for the United Artists studio as fast as I could.

Milestone had been rehearsing the cast for about ten days when I arrived at the studio. He explained that he had already talked with Joe Schenck at MGM about borrowing me for the part.

"He says I'm crazy to want to hire you," Milestone told me. "Says you're not the type, that you can't play a hard-boiled newspaper man. What do you think?"

"I don't know," I answered, "but it's the kind of a part I want. Anything to get out of a dress suit."

The other lead in *The Front Page* is the Hildy Johnson char-

acter, which was played by Pat O'Brien. For many years there has been a Hollywood legend that Milestone hired O'Brien to play the Hildy part thinking he had played it on the road and that not until the picture was shot did he discover that Pat had played the part of Walter Burns on the road. Although this makes a very good Hollywood story, it is completely untrue. Hollywood makes lots of mistakes but not that kind.

Milestone is a fellow who doesn't like to get up in the morning. He has a difficult time waking up. Not until noon can he distinguish his right hand from his left. Since he owned 50 per cent of the picture with Howard Hughes, he decided that for once in his life he would shoot a picture the way he wanted to. Instead of the usual Hollywood shooting schedule of nine A.M. till six P.M. with one hour out for lunch, Milestone started shooting at one o'clock in the afternoon and shot until about seven. Then everybody would go and have a Turkish bath, a rubdown, and a nap. At eight-thirty we would all have dinner and then return to the studio and shoot until one o'clock in the morning.

There was a real crap table set up on the stage, at which a continuous crap game was in play. Milestone also supplied a bar and a bartender on the stage. Whenever anyone wanted a drink, he just stepped up and ordered it, free of charge. At the end of the picture, which took five weeks to shoot, his bill for liquor was over \$900.

Most of the picture was shot in one set—the pressroom of the Criminal Court Building in Chicago. It was supposed to be a dirty, untidy place with cigarette butts and copy paper on the floor. Every day of shooting it got dirtier and dirtier. After we finished shooting for the day, a sign would be placed on the set warning the janitors not to sweep or dust it.

Milestone conceived the idea of putting a circular dolly track on this set so that the camera could invade any part of the room during the long, continuous scenes he had planned. Laying the curved dolly track was no problem, but when it was tried out, it

was found that the camera truck would not stay on the track. Milestone asked Howard Hughes to send over one of his engineers to solve the problem. This fellow with three degrees, who could juggle astronomical equations, came over and inspected the dolly and the track. Then he looked at everybody as much as to say, "So these are the great brains that make pictures." After that he took a tenpenny spike and an old spool, nailed it onto the dolly so that it fitted against the track, and the problem was solved.

I had the four toughest scenes in that picture that I have ever had to play. Each one ran for about six minutes, which in motion pictures is a hell of a long "take." Most takes in pictures seldom run more than two minutes. Every one of these six-minute scenes took all night to shoot.

The character of Walter Burns was supposed to talk like a machine gun, bang-bang-bang. In his first big scene he gave many rapid-fire orders, grabbed a telephone, dictated a story, hung up, and delivered an oration about the newspaper business. I had never played that sort of a part before, so it was difficult for me. When we started this first long take, I kept blowing lines, and forgetting speeches, thus ruining the scene. I got so upset that I begged Milestone to cut the scene up into shorter takes.

"You say you're an actor," Milestone finally taunted. "Well, prove it! Real actors go through two hours on the stage without blowing any lines. Can't you do a six-minute scene?"

That stopped me. I went back at it and finally we got the scene right. After the first one, the others were not so difficult. Later I was glad that Milestone had made me play those long scenes in one take, because they looked terrific to Hollywood directors.

That year I was up for an Academy Award, and at last I was out of that dress suit. I was back in business again.

## 26: *Gold in them Hills*

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**P**ROFESSIONALLY, *The Front Page* meant as much to me as *A Woman Of Paris*. Up to that time I had made fifty-nine pictures in Hollywood; that is usually a career in this town. I had risen to stardom, hit the skids, and headed for oblivion. But as this is being written, I have made fifty-four more pictures since *The Front Page* and my earning power is greater than when I was a star. Hollywood has been very good to me.

The great trick in this business is to get good parts in outstanding productions, because Hollywood seldom goes to see anything but the big smash pictures. One time I was changing clothes in the locker room after a golf game and in the next aisle I heard someone say, "What's happened to Menjou? I haven't seen him in anything in years. Is he washed up?"

I had been working steadily, making eight pictures in two years, but they were the kind that nobody in Hollywood goes to see. Unless an actor works in a hit picture about once a year, he becomes a forgotten man.

Since *The Front Page* I have been very fortunate. There has seldom been a year in which I have not landed a good part in an important picture. After *Front Page* it was *A Farewell To Arms*, with Helen Hayes and Gary Cooper, in which I played the Italian doctor. The next year it was *Morning Glory*, which made Katharine Hepburn a star overnight and won her an Academy award.

Shortly before starting this latter picture my second marriage had cracked up; I was living alone in my home on Nottingham Road. My operation in Paris had not helped me and I was suffering from my same old complaint. I was feeling as pessimistic as a Republican candidate in Georgia.

We had reached the depths of the depression; in Detroit the banks had closed. Once more my French ancestors began whispering in my ear. I remembered what a friend of mine in France had said to me during the crash in 1929. He had prophesied that the whole economic structure of the world would soon collapse and that the only safe thing to own was gold. I decided that the time had come to heed his advice; so I began to withdraw my cash reserve from the banks. I took the money in gold—twenty-dollar gold pieces—\$80,000 worth.

The money was in canvas bags, which I put in a vault that I had in the cellar. Then I really began to worry. There I was with all that money in the house and I lived on a lonely dead-end street without even a next-door neighbor. Some night, when the servants were away, I might easily be murdered in my bed for that much money.

But when the Hollywood banks started failing and then closed, I had my money safely out of them. Still, it was little consolation to tell myself how smart I had been, for I had those pains in my stomach and I felt like the devil.

For about three days I wasn't needed on the picture, so I went to the hospital and had another series of X rays—medium shots, close shots, dolly shots, the works. The doctor panned around the corner of my liver and discovered that I had a duodenal ulcer. It was not just the garden variety but a superulcer worthy of an executive producer. The doctor kept my X rays to show to all the other doctors, handed me a superbill, and told me that all I had to do was to live on milk. *Milk!*

I left the hospital in a very unhappy frame of mind and went looking for somebody who would sympathize with me—an old friend who would cheer me up. I drove to Paramount, which was full of old friends, and looked up Mal St. Clair. He was on one of the stages shooting a picture, and with him was another old friend who I knew would surely give me a couple of chuckles. This was Wilson Mizner, the famous Hollywood wit and founder of the original Brown Derby. Wilson was working on the set as



During the shooting of *You Were Never Lovelier*, 1942, starring Rita Hayworth and Fred Astaire, Xavier Cugat, who was one of the cast, painted the caricature of me that is seen on the jacket of this book.



This is a publicity picture taken during the shooting of *A Letter of Introduction*, 1938, with Charlie McCarthy, Edgar Bergen, and Andrea Leeds. Charlie stole the show.



A scene with Edward Brophy in *Golden Boy*, 1939, in which I played the part of a very natty prize-fight manager.



Shortly after the start of World War II, I made my first USO camp tour and met Admiral John McCain at one of the camps near Seattle.

an actor and gag man. He was in fine fettle that day. As I walked in, everybody on the set was chuckling over one of his sallies. Mal and Mizner greeted me jovially.

"What's new? How are you?"

"I'm feeling very low," I replied. "I'm at death's door."

"What's the matter?" asked Mal, looking sympathetic.

"I've just come from the hospital. I've been through three days of X rays, and they tell me I've got the most terrific ulcer in the history of Hollywood."

Before Mal could reply, Mizner cracked, "I think the ulcer's got the worst of it."

Everybody on the set collapsed. I soon discovered that in Hollywood an ulcer is strictly a humorous ailment. If you have influenza or sinus trouble or a toothache, people are sorry for you; but if you have an ulcer, you are just a comic character.

I went home, had a glass of milk, and lay down to die. It was March 10, 1933. Suddenly I was almost thrown out of bed. The whole house began to shake. I heard rumbling, crackling sounds. It was an earthquake. I thought I had gotten used to earthquakes. They come with a certain amount of regularity in California—nothing to worry about; a quick tremor and it's all over. But this one was a granddaddy earthquake. The house kept right on shaking. A crack ran up the wall. At that I jumped up and headed for the great outdoors. My house was built on a sixty-degree slope and I had visions of it rolling down the side of that mountain. But as I ran for the front door, I suddenly remembered my gold in the cellar vault. I changed my direction and headed for the cellar. I had to get that gold out before the house rolled away.

The house kept right on trembling. I heard the walls crackling, the foundations giving way. I got the vault open. There were eight bags of money—each weighed about forty pounds. I was a sick man, but I grabbed those bags, two at a time, and ran up the stairs with them and outside to my car, which was parked in the drive. I had heard that gold coins, rubbing against each other, wear down and lose their value. The building was shaking so



hard that I could hardly stand up, but I carried the bags very carefully to be sure the gold wouldn't rub off.

Finally I had all the gold out of the house. I sat in the car with it, a revolver in my pocket, ready for any further emergency. The ground was still shaking. I was supposed to report to the studio in the morning, but I knew there would be no more picture making in California. By this time Los Angeles and Hollywood must be a shambles. The studios would be tumbled to the ground, many of my friends dead or injured. What a miserable place this was! My father had been right. There was no stability to the motion-picture business.

There are two kinds of Hollywood actors. There are those who hit the big time quickly and easily and, when the money begins to roll in, they think it will last forever and they spend it that way. Then there are those who have been hungry. They remember back to those days and they say to themselves, "I don't know how long these fools are going to keep paying me fantastic sums each week, so I'll save some of it for the day when I can't get a job."

Once Clark Gable said to me, "I still remember the day I was hungry in Butte, Montana. I was so hungry I could have eaten the ears off a steer, without salt. And cold! I was so cold I thought I'd never get warm again. I had a fine pigskin traveling bag—a present from my father—which I loved above all the possessions I owned. But I pawned it, bought a meal and a suit of long woolen underwear, and bummed a ride on a freight train to Oregon, where I found a job in a lumber camp at four dollars a day. Brother, I don't ever want to be hungry again."

That was how I felt when that earthquake started shaking the daylight out of me. I was already hungry but I told myself I had to get my money out of that house on the side of a cliff or I might be hungry again someday.

I was sitting there in my car still waiting to see my house fall down when the lights began to come on over Hollywood. First the street lights blinked on, marking off the town in a checker-

board design—Hollywood Boulevard the brightest, of course—then the windows of tall buildings and of squat California bungalows lit up, until finally all movieland was alight with its usual brilliance. From where I sat, high on the mountainside, I could see that Hollywood had been no more disturbed by the worst earthquake in its history than it would be by a spell of “unusual weather.” There would be cracks to be repaired and a few chimneys to be replaced and an excited exchange of stories in the Brown Derby, but Hollywood was still in business.

I said to myself, “Adolphe, you dumbbell, put your gold back in these mountains and go get your glass of milk. Suppose another earthquake comes. Suppose the whole mountain falls down and they dig you out of the debris clutching a revolver and squatting over your gold. What kind of publicity would that be? Is that proper insouciance and aplomb? If you are going to die, at least you should be found in proper surroundings and in proper attire. Go back into the house, Adolphe, and put on your most luxurious lounging robe. Sit down by the fireplace in the library with a copy of Chaucer or Shakespeare—and relax. Tomorrow you have to be on the set at nine o’clock, dapper and unruffled as always.”

## 27: *The Hills Are Dotted*

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**B**AD pictures are something you cannot help in Hollywood; you get them by the dozens. All you can do about them is to be philosophical and to feather your nest with them. The hills of California are dotted with houses that I have bought or built from my earnings on bad pictures. Some people get rich by building houses in Hollywood, but I have never made a nickel on any of mine.

The first house I owned was at 1019 Doheny Drive. It was a very livable house just the way it was. But nobody ever buys a house in Hollywood and moves in. First he has to add a room here and a room there, also a bit of paint, wallpaper, and perchance some wrought-iron grillwork, then a swimming pool. All this added up, in my case, to about \$15,000. That was a lot of renovation in those days, but even so, that first house was just a cottage compared with some of the houses my friends owned. Most of them were super rococo mansions, large enough to seat Democratic national conventions. They had pipe organs in them and back-yard swimming pools in which destroyers could be launched. My little house would have made only a gatehouse for some of those places. When I moved out, I was so ashamed of even owning it that I practically gave it away.

About 1924 I began looking around for vacant property on which to build. I could have bought some land in Beverly Hills and made a fantastic profit, but somebody talked me out of that—an oculist, I think. He said, "Don't buy in Beverly Hills. It's very bad on the eyes. In the morning, when you drive to work, you have to face the glare of the rising sun. And in the evening, on

the way back from work, you face the glare of the setting sun. Very bad."

I couldn't bear the idea of facing the sun, so I bought three lots on Nottingham Road, above Los Feliz Boulevard. That was the right neighborhood at the time. Cecil B. De Mille lived there, Frank Morgan, W. C. Fields, and many other stars.

These plots were called "view lots," which means expensive to build on. A real-estate man takes you up the side of a mountain and shows you some property from which you can see for miles—very exclusive; even the name sounds exclusive—Nottingham Road. You fall in love with the view. The agent forgets to tell you how expensive it will be to build on the side of a sixty-degree slope. You find that out later.

It was my intention to build just a simple little bungalow for myself and my mother. I told the architect that I wouldn't spend a penny more than \$25,000. Later I intended to build another house, next door, for myself—something a little more elaborate, not quite as fantastic as Valentino's "Falcon's Lair," but in keeping with my position as a movie star.

I should have been able to build this first house at 2612 Nottingham Road from the proceeds of a little ditty entitled *A Night of Mystery*, but as it turned out I had to include my entire salary from *His Tiger Lady*.

It started out to be a house with only two bedrooms, but after we had started building, I decided I had better have three bedrooms—the builder said the place would have better resale value. So we added another room and a few thousand dollars.

When we started to excavate, we discovered that the side of this mountain was solid rock. We had to blast in order to get the rock out, and on the side away from the mountain we had to build thirty-foot concrete walls.

After we had been building for a while, some friend came up to look at the house, which was half finished. This friend looked around and said, "What! No rumpus room! Oh, you've got to have a rumpus room!"

That was the latest thing in those days—a rumpus room. You couldn't throw a party for six people without taking them to the rumpus room, as though you didn't trust them in the parlor. So I decided to have a rumpus room. But in order to make room for one we had to tunnel underneath and dig out an extra space. Unfortunately there was no place to put in a stairway, so we made an outside entrance—very novel. When it was raining, the guests had to use umbrellas to get to it.

About this time I was preparing to get married again, so I had my architect start plans for the second house right next door. This was to be a big house. For my new bride I wanted the best. My mother could have the "little" house all to herself.

But when Mother came up and took a look at the little house with the three bedrooms and the rumpus room, she would have none of it. "What would I do in a huge house like that?" she asked. "I'd rattle 'around like four beans in a gourd."

I bought a bungalow for Mother in San Fernando Valley and told the architect to stop figuring on a big house because I knew by this time that a big house would cost me a million dollars. Instead we would shift the fine hand-carved doors, oak-paneled walls, and mullioned windows that he had planned for the big house into the little house.

By this time the cost of the little house had already mounted to \$60,000 and my bride-to-be had decided that she would like to have a swimming pool.

"How much will that cost?" I asked the builder.

"Not more than eight thousand."

"Go ahead," I instructed with a wave of my hand.

It cost \$14,000 by the time it was fully equipped. And when we finally moved in, the total cost of the little house amounted to \$92,000.

But I was not cured. A few years later I built the big house at 2606 Nottingham Road—four master bedrooms and quarters for four servants. I still had the plans for it lying around and I hated

to see them go to waste. But that time I was lucky. Since we were in the middle of the depression, the house only cost me about \$35,000. I moved the paneling and mullioned windows from the small house, which made the big house look much more expensive. And the swimming pool was on the same lot with the big house, so I was way ahead in that respect. Besides, I sold the small house for \$27,000 and later sold the big house for \$30,000, so I figure I really made money on the deal, counting the use I got out of the swimming pool and the mullioned windows. That's not a bad profit in Hollywood.

The big house was built on the overtime I collected from one of the worst pictures I have ever been in. It was called *The Trumphet Blows*. I'm not sure what was wrong with the picture; it had famous writers and a good director. But I do know that everybody was miscast. George Raft and I were the stars, and we were supposed to be brothers. He played the part of a Mexican bullfighter and I was a Mexican Robin Hood in tight pants and a big sombrero. Somebody must have heard that I could speak Spanish, so I got the part.

The picture ran for weeks and weeks over the shooting schedule because of the bullfight. That was the big climax of the story. George Raft was supposed to fight the bull and kill it. He became the darling of Mexico City and I had to forgive him for something or other because he turned out to be such a brave bullfighter.

We shot the bullfight sequences in Gilmore Stadium. The studio carpenters rebuilt the place so that it looked like a real bullfight arena, with a circular ring and a *barrera*, or protecting wall, around the ring. I went over to see it before we started shooting, and after one look I wondered how the producers were going to fill that arena with spectators from the Screen Actors' Guild without breaking Columbia Pictures.

But they had a way. The next day I discovered that they had filled the grandstand with dummies and that in between were

the extras. Each extra controlled about six dummies. When he stood up, the dummies stood up; when he leaned forward, the dummies leaned with him.

I knew as soon as I saw that grandstand filled with dummies instead of extras that we actors would have to do something about that. Even back in the old days in Brooklyn I had never seen anything quite that tough on actors' appetites.

The main trouble with the picture was that the only bulls available were two black Miura bulls that had been used in the bullfight in *The Kid from Spain*, starring Eddie Cantor. It is a well-known fact that after a bull has been in the arena five minutes, he gets smart; after ten minutes he is very smart; and after fifteen minutes he is so smart that nobody can fight him without getting killed. These two bulls had been given a postgraduate course in *The Kid from Spain*; as actors they were uncooperative and refused to fight fairly. A professional bullfighter, who had been hired to double for Raft, climbed into the arena with first one bull and then the other. They both chased him out of the ring and over the *barrera*. There were many bullfighting experts around Gilmore Stadium—*banderilleros*, picadors, and the like—but the bulls chased them all out of the ring, showing no favoritism whatever. I think those bulls would have chased even Ernest Hemingway out of the ring.

In 1939 I bought a pair of dark glasses and built a house in Beverly Hills. This house, which I hope will be my last venture in housebuilding, has no hillside view, the swimming pool is not carved out of solid rock, and there is no rumpus room, so we are forced to entertain our friends in the parlor; but at least it's a roof over our heads.

The house in Beverly Hills was paid for by six weeks' work in a picture called *That's Right, You're Wrong*, starring Kay Kyser, a maestro of the air waves. The director was David Butler, a former leading man in pictures, a very able director, and an old golfing pal from the Divot Diggers Club.

I didn't know Kay Kyser before I was hired to work with him. We met in Dave's office after I had signed my contract. I took one look at Kay and couldn't believe my eyes: he was to be the star of the picture, but he was wearing a suit that would have frightened an Indian.

At the first opportunity I got my friend Dave aside and told him it was plain to see that I would have to give Mr. Kyser a few pointers about his clothes. Dave agreed that something should be done about Kay's wardrobe. This was his first picture and it could make or break him. He had started his career as the leader of a college band at the University of North Carolina and had become the biggest thing in the dance-band world. He was making \$22,000 a week but was still wearing North Carolina clothes. Dave suggested that I had better give him the full treatment. So he turned Kay over to me and I made a few subtle suggestions.

"I understand, Kay," I said, "that you are a very keen student of the dollar. You have a million smackers salted away in gilt-edged securities. How did you ever do it in clothes like that? Look at those buttonholes! Look at those buttons! Those lapels are a disgrace! I wouldn't be caught at a Chinese dogfight in a burlap sack like that!"

Kay is a very sensitive fellow; he was hurt. "What is wrong with the lapels and the buttons?" he asked. "The suit covers me, doesn't it? And it fits."

"Fits!" I exclaimed. "If that fits you, son, you are deformed. You are a man with overgrown lumps and exaggerated cavities. And if you ever get caught in a California fog, that fugitive from a ragpicker's pack will shrivel up like a raisin."

I could see that he was weakening, but he fought back. "I like this suit. I paid eighty-five dollars for it!"

"Eighty-five dollars!" I echoed. "No wonder! You can't do that sort of thing. What will those millions think who hear you on the radio every week if they hear about this? You'll lose every listener you've got!"



"My radio program is doing all right," Kay insisted. "Besides, they can't see my clothes over the radio."

But finally he gave up. Dave and I beat him down until he agreed to go to Eddie Schmidt's with me and get fitted for three or four suits to use in the picture.

I went with Johnny Gallupo, Schmidt's cutter, to superintend the final fitting. We hadn't started shooting yet, but Kay was recording the band numbers on the sound stage at RKO. He tried on the first suit and then went out to show it to the band. The boys looked it over, then Kay came back and reported that they didn't like it.

"They don't like that suit!" I shouted. "Those North Carolina hillbillies! Have you noticed what they're wearing? I have devoted years to the study of clothes, and this man who has fitted you is one of the greatest designers in the world. Well-dressed men come from all over this country just to have him design their clothes. You have insulted a great artist."

I guess he had, too. Johnny picked up the four suits in high dudgeon and walked out. He wouldn't come to the studio again. I had to pick the suits up and bring them to the studio myself. Kay wore them in the picture, but I don't think he or the band ever liked them.

A year or so later, while I was doing a picture with Rita Hayworth and Fred Astaire called *You Were Never Lovelier*, the studio's publicity department released a story in which I selected my idea of the world's ten best-dressed men. When Kay saw the story in one of the movie columns, he sent me a telegram: MY NAME IS NOT AMONG THE CHOSEN. YOU HAVE BROKEN MY HEART.

## 28: *Little Miss Marker*

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EVERY actor has to fight type casting and type thinking in Hollywood. Writers, directors, producers, all talk in terms of types. They will say, "This is strictly a Humphrey Bogart type, except he's afraid of guns," or "There is a little of Bill Powell in this character but not so refined," or "I see this guy as a kind of Cary Grant with shadings of Wallace Beery."

I fought that kind of talk for years. I was the Menjou type and nothing else—which meant a fellow on the Retail Merchant Tailors' list of the ten best-dressed men. If a part called for an actor to wear an ill-fitting forty-dollar suit, nobody ever cast me in it.

Why Al Hall ever thought of casting me for the part of the bookmaker in *Little Miss Marker* I'll never understand. But he wanted me and I got the part. It was one of the greatest favors anybody has ever done for me in Hollywood.

The character I played was a Broadway bookmaker, a frowsy misanthrope who thought about nothing but the bangtails. He lived like a miser, and his main interest in life was collecting bets from the suckers. I had to furnish only one suit for the part—a blue serge. I didn't even own a blue serge and besides, this was supposed to be a thirty-five-dollar fiddle-and-flute that only half fitted and that got a pressing once every four weeks. I started searching for such a garment. After trying Paramount's wardrobe department and the Western Costume Company, I finally found the right outfit in the wardrobe department of RKO. I put on the suit and dropped into Al Hall's office for his O.K. He looked it over and shook his head.

"You are definitely no longer one of the ten best-dressed men," he said, "but you are still among the first twenty."

We had to do something about that, so we sent the suit to Paramount's wardrobe department with instructions to take a little of the newness out of it. The suit must have been used as a doormat, because when it came back, it really looked the part. But when I put it on, Al still shook his head.

"Something's wrong," he said. "Now you look like a millionaire dressed for a hard-times party."

"We can't make the suit look any worse," I told him, "or I will be playing the part of a hobo."

Finally we realized that it was my mustache that was destroying the illusion, so I combed it out to make it look scraggly. Then I stopped getting haircuts. As the final touch I got an old beat-up three-dollar hat from wardrobe. Nothing looks quite so shoddy as an old three-dollar hat that has begun to molt and to get a little bloated around the brim.

The plot of *Little Miss Marker* was very simple. A fellow came into my bookie joint and lost a bet but had no money with which to pay. He had his little six-year-old daughter with him, so he left her as security until he could go out and get the money. But he was killed in an automobile accident and never came back. I was stuck with this six-year-old orphaned child. Nobody else in the place would take care of her, so I had to take her home with me to the cheap apartment where I lived. Finally I, and all of my tough Broadway friends, fell in love with her.

The cast of the picture included Charles Bickford, Lynn Overman, Dorothy Dell, and Warren Hymer. I thought I was the star until we started shooting, and then I discovered that the star was an actress I'd never heard of before—a six-year-old by the name of Shirley Temple.

What an actress and what a scene stealer she was! After a week of shooting she knew half the tricks of the trade. We finally started kidding with her as though she were a trouper with forty years' experience. I would say, "Look, Miss Temple, don't try to

hog the camera. Maybe you think I'm just a beginner, but I'll have you know I was a star before you were born. I'm wise to all your underhand tricks."

Like all child actors she was a wonderful study. She was always letter perfect in her lines. About the second week on the picture, after I had blown one speech about four times, she turned to Al and said, "Mr. Hall, is it too late to replace Mr. Menjou in this picture?" I did a triple take until I realized that Al had put her up to it.

I never had more fun on a picture in my life. Good pictures are always that way. It's the bad pictures that ruin tempers and start feuds and give you indigestion.

Shirley always knew everybody else's lines as well as her own. There was one scene in which she made me read to her from the story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. In the middle of the scene I stumbled over a word and forgot the rest of my line. Shirley immediately finished the line for me. I did a big "surprise take" right at the camera, then turned back to the book, mumbling to myself. The stage crew laughed so hard that Al decided to play the scene that way, so we went back and shot it over. I stumbled over the long word and then Shirley corrected me and went right on. Then I did a slow reaction indicating that I had just discovered that I was reading something to her that she knew by heart. It was one of the biggest laughs in the show.

During the making of the picture Mr. and Mrs. Temple bought a new car, which Shirley was crazy about. All she could talk about for days was her wonderful new automobile. Then came the day when she was to do a scene in which she was supposed to cry huge crocodile tears. Shirley had rehearsed the scene and though she played it wonderfully, Al thought that if he could make her really cry, it would be more effective than using glycerin tears. Al and Mrs. Temple discussed the problem. They didn't want to do anything that would be too rough on Shirley, and of course she was the happiest child one could imagine, but she had to be made to cry.

Finally they decided on a plan. Mrs. Temple left the set, supposedly to do some shopping. A few minutes later a phone call came for Shirley from her mother. Al took Shirley to the telephone and held her up to it so that she could talk.

"Shirley," said Mrs. Temple, "a terrible thing has happened. Somebody has run into our new car and smashed it all to pieces. It's ruined."

Shirley started to cry. Al rushed her to the set and we started shooting the scene. She read her lines sobbing as though her heart would break. We all felt like dogs. The minute the shot was finished Al confessed that it was all a joke and that the new car was all right. Later, when Shirley had another crying scene to do, she said, "Please, Uncle Al, no more gags."

Frank Lloyd tells about getting Jackie Coogan to cry while he was playing the part of Oliver Twist. The scene was in an orphanage. Jack and another boy were scrubbing the floor. The other boy asked, "Where's your muvver?" Jackie was supposed to answer, with big tears in his eyes, "My mother is dead, sir." But when he read the line, he couldn't make the tears come.

"Just try to imagine that your mother really is dead," instructed Lloyd.

They tried it again, but still no tears. Finally Jackie said, "Mr. Lloyd, would it be all right if I imagine that my dog is dead?"

I went to the preview of *Little Miss Marker* at the Alexandria Theater in Glendale. Sitting with me was my friend Jim Oviatt, a man who had not cried since his third birthday; his tear ducts had been atrophied for twenty years. But in the middle of the picture he started blubbering. I knew then that we had a great picture.

After the film was released I suddenly started getting a flood of fan mail. It was bigger than any I had had for years. I also got a silent reprimand from the Merchant Tailors' Association. That year they left me off the list of ten best-dressed men. It was a pleasure.

One Sunday during the making of *Little Miss Marker* I was

lying around the house, drinking milk to keep my ulcer happy, and developing a three-day growth of stubble on my chin, which was necessary for the scenes we were to shoot on Monday. The telephone rang and it was Alma Morgan, Frank Morgan's wife.

"We're having a cocktail party, Dolph," she announced, "and we need a single man. Come on down."

I told her that I was drinking milk, that I had a three-day growth of beard, and that I didn't feel like getting dressed.

"Come just as you are," she urged. "Your whiskers won't matter, and we have lots of milk."

So finally I got into my car and drove down the hill to the Morgans' place, which was just below mine. I was wearing a white sport coat, which made my bewhiskered face look even more frightening; but I didn't care, for I expected to know everybody at the party.

However, when I walked in, the first person I saw was a total stranger. She was a friend of Alma's and was helping out with the party.

"Come in," she said. "I'm Verree Teasdale."

After one look at Miss Teasdale, I wanted another. I thought to myself, "Look out, Adolphe, here you go again!"

She said, "What will you have to drink?"

I said, "Milk."

"Oh," she said.

It wasn't a very good start, so I tried again. "I hope you'll excuse my appearance. I'm growing this beard for a part I'm playing."

"I suppose I should know you," she remarked, studying my face, "but I'm afraid I don't remember your name."

Great! I was doing fine. My publicity man would hear about this.

"I'm Adolphe Menjou," I admitted modestly.

"Oh, yes, of course." Then she excused herself and disappeared. I decided that she must have seen me recently in *The Trumpet Blows*, playing the part of that Mexican Robin Hood.

After paying my respects to the other guests, I felt myself gravitating back toward Miss Teasdale. She was wearing a dark-red dress, which was very becoming. I thought to myself, "Twice is enough. How many times are you going to make the same fatal mistake?" But inevitably I found myself in a corner talking to Miss Teasdale again.

She was in pictures, too, I learned. She had come out from the New York stage and was under contract to Warner Brothers.

"I haven't done anything much in pictures yet," she said, "but you may have seen me in New York.

"What shows did you do?"

"*The Youngest*, with Genevieve Tobin and Henry Hull."

"No I missed that."

"*The Constant Wife*, with Ethel Barrymore."

"I guess I missed that, too."

"*The Greeks Had a Word for It*."

"I hear that was very good but—"

I quickly changed the subject to motion pictures. Had she seen *The Front Page*?

No, somehow she had missed that.

*A Farewell to Arms*?

No, she'd been rehearsing a play when that came out.

*Morocco*?

No, she almost went to that, but something came up and she didn't.

*Fashions in Love*?

No, but she was sure she had seen me in something.

*A Woman of Paris*?

Good heavens, no! She was only a little girl when that came out!

Oh, fine! Great!

Suddenly she remembered what it was. Something with Katy Hepburn.

*Morning Glory*!

That was it! She hadn't liked it. She'd walked out.



Veiree taught me to play backgammon in 1934 and has been beating me at it ever since.



This is an unposed photograph taken in 1945 at the Douglas Aircraft Company during the final war-bond drive.





Here I am having my morning coffee while waiting to shoot my first scene with Clark Gable in *The Hucksters*, 1947. Sixteen years before this, Gable played a minor role with me in *The East Way* at MCM.

I suggested that we get away from the party and have dinner together. So we excused ourselves to our hostess and Verree ran upstairs to get her coat. By coincidence she and Florence Eldridge, Freddy March's wife, had coats that were almost duplicates. Verree got the wrong coat and didn't find it out until we were on our way. It was a size twelve; hers was a sixteen. Both of us were uncomfortable all evening—I with my whiskers and she in a coat that was too small.

We went to the Colonial House, which was located between Sunset Boulevard and Holloway Drive. It was one of the best eating places in town, run by the Werthheimer brothers. The bar and dining room were downstairs; upstairs were roulette and dice tables.

In the bar we met Ginger Rogers with Lew Ayres, Gloria Swanson with Michael Farmer, and Tom Mix without his horse. Gloria suggested that we have dinner with her and Mike. I didn't know how to get out of it, so we made it a foursome. I decided that night at dinner that I was going to ask Verree to be the third Mrs. Menjou. And it turned out that that was one of the smartest decisions I have ever made.

We were married several months later at the Los Angeles City Hall. I'll never forget the hat Verree was wearing. It was a sort of black tam with a bunch of flowers stuck on it. I thought it was terrible but I never told her till a year later.

"Why in the world didn't you tell me that day?" she asked.

"I was afraid to," I admitted. "I thought it might start an argument and you'd walk out on me."

A movie actor can never plan on a honeymoon. The studios won't let him have one. They may not give him a job for six months, but let him start on a honeymoon and they will chase him halfway around the world, track him down, and bring him back.

We had planned to spend our honeymoon in Yosemite, but we stopped first in San Francisco. In the middle of the night the telephone started ringing. It was my agent.

"Adolphe," he said. "Get on the train and come right back. Darryl Zanuck has a wonderful part for you."

"You tell Darryl he is a very funny man," I answered, "but this is no time for gags."

"I'm serious," he said. "They start shooting Monday."

"I'm going to Yosemite for a honeymoon," I told him, "and I won't be back for three weeks. But if the part is really good, I'll make it a week from Monday."

So we didn't have our honeymoon until two years later.

## 29: *A Personal Appearance*

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THE picture for which we cut our honeymoon short was *The Mighty Barnum*. Zanuck had borrowed Wally Beery from MGM for the title role, while I played Bailey, his partner. Of course, it had to be a picture with animal actors—the kind of movie I hate above all others. There were all sorts of animals in it—elephants, lions, tigers, monkeys.

The star animal was a big female chimpanzee. Whether the real Barnum actually had a big chimp for a pet I don't know, but in the picture the chimp was his constant companion. It was probably a character touch added to Barnum's life by the screen writers, who never hesitate to remake history so that it fits the Hollywood pattern.

This chimpanzee didn't seem to like the trainer who was in charge of her. She was a very sweet chimp, I guess, as chimps go, but she didn't like the fellow who was the boss man. One day she got away from him and started running around the set. The trainer fired a blank cartridge to scare her back into her cage, but instead the chimp climbed up on the scenery and swung up into the flies under the roof.

There she was, where nobody could reach her, costing Twentieth Century and Zanuck more money every minute, because we couldn't shoot without her. Finally Wally Beery went over, looked up at the animal, and began making funny noises in his throat. The chimp cocked an eye at him and down she came.

"What was that noise you made?" I asked him.

"That was monkey language," he grinned.

"Don't let your boss Louis B. Mayer hear about this," I told him, "or he'll cast you in *The Hairy Ape*."

Hollywood has had some very bright animals. I once worked with a parrot named Joe that was wonderful. He was a big, gray, African parrot and could imitate perfectly the voice of a man. He wasn't a screeching parrot; he had a beautiful baritone speaking voice and excellent diction. I was so crazy about Joe that I bought him and brought him home. I thought he would add tone to the dining room.

We had Joe around for quite a while before we discovered his weakness. We had a big dinner party one night and one of our guests was telling a long-winded story. It was a very dull and very egotistical tale. Finally he finished and everybody chuckled politely—but not Joe, who had been sitting quietly on his perch in the corner of the dining room. He gave our guest a big razzberry, but louder and more vulgar than any ever heard at the Brooklyn Dodgers' ball park.

We discovered, as time went by, that Joe had three or four types of razzberries. They ranged from mild expressions of disbelief to loud declarations of complete disgust. I always thought he knew what was being said at the dinner table, because those razzberries always came at just the right times. Whenever somebody started telling how great he was in some picture or how he had topped somebody else in an exchange of repartee, Joe would give him the old razzberry. I thought he was very funny until the night he gave me the razz. That's when I sold him.

*The Mighty Barnum* was the first picture I ever did for Darryl Zanuck; after that he called me for so many parts that I began to feel like a contract player on the Twentieth Century-Fox lot. I played in *Sing, Baby, Sing*, with Alice Faye; *One in a Million*, Sonja Henie's first picture; *Café Metropole*, with Tyrone Power; *Thanks for Everything*, with Jack Haley; *Roxie Hart*, with Ginger Rogers; and *Sweet Rosie O'Grady*, with Betty Grable.

At that time Zanuck was making a great many original stories,

created by studio writers for the special talents of his stars. As a result, most of the parts I was offered had been tailored especially for me.

One of these was in the very successful musical *Sing, Baby, Sing*, which was based on an episode in John Barrymore's life—his romance with Elaine Barry, who was his last wife. I was engaged to play the Barrymore character. After the picture was released I was called a number of times by other studios to play "Barrymore" parts—which shows the inconsistency of Hollywood. Jack was still alive at that time, and they could just as easily have had the original instead of an impersonation.

Meanwhile Zanuck was so intrigued with the dramatic possibilities of Barrymore's past that he decided to make another picture based on his rise and fall in the theater. The title given the final script was *The Great Profile*, and once more I was called to play the Barrymore role. But my agent and I were very dubious about this one. I insisted that if I played the part, I would have to be protected from all possible damage suits. I finally got a clause in my contract to that effect.

But before we could even start shooting, Barrymore learned about the picture and threatened to bring suit. "Nobody," he declared, "is going to make a picture based on my life, unless I play the leading role."

Zanuck decided that he didn't want to involve Twentieth Century-Fox in damage suits and injunctions, so he hired Barrymore. But I also had a contract to play the part. As a result I collected my salary and played golf all during the shooting of the picture. That was the easiest money I ever earned in Hollywood.

In another Zanuck picture, called *Café Metropole*, I wore what I consider my most publicized wardrobe. It consisted of four suits, all of which were tailored for me by Hawes and Curtis in London. I had purchased these suits in the summer of 1936, when Verree and I finally went on our delayed honeymoon. When we reached London, I ordered the four suits and had preliminary fittings. But since we were leaving England before the suits could

be finished, I asked if Mr. Benson, their cutter, could come to Paris with the suits and give me a final fitting there. It was not uncommon at that time for London shops to do this, and they readily agreed.

Two weeks later I received a telegram in Paris to the effect that Mr. Benson, with an assistant, would arrive at a certain hour on a certain day to complete the fitting of my clothes. So on that day I waited in my rooms at the Ritz for Mr. Benson to appear. Time went by and no Mr. Benson. Finally the phone rang. It was Benson.

"Mr. Menjou, I am down at the Gare St. Lazarre with your clothes in a trunk, but they will not let me in. They won't give me a temporary entry visa."

I called the United States Embassy and talked to the commercial attaché. He sent his assistant over to help me out. We got on the phone and talked to the customs officers, the police, and the stationmaster at the Gare St. Lazarre. There was never such a hullabaloo over four suits of clothes. One would have thought that we were trying to smuggle in a trunkful of diamonds.

At last the assistant from the Embassy, Verree, and I went down to the railroad station to try to straighten matters out. I was very upset by this time. For years France had been claiming me as its own—*l'artiste magnifique français*—and now I couldn't get four suits through customs for a quick fitting.

We went to the office of the *chef de gare*. There we found Mr. Benson, his assistant, the *douanier*, and the *chef* himself. We had another voluble exchange of French, but to no avail. Mr. Benson and the clothes could not be allowed to leave the customs office.

"You seem to believe, monsieur," I said, "that I am trying to smuggle four suits of clothes into France. But I will prove to you that I am not!" With that I took off my coat and my waistcoat and started to remove my trousers.

"What are you doing, Adolphe?" demanded Verree.

"I'm going to have my clothes fitted right here," I answered. "Cameral Action! Mr. Benson, open the trunk and go to work."

The office of the stationmaster was a glass enclosure open to the waiting rooms of the station. In five minutes we had a tremendous audience. We should have charged admission. Mr. Benson was a bit nonplused. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before—or to me, for that matter. As for Verree, she collapsed in a chair; she thought it was the funniest thing she had ever seen.

But we fitted the four suits, then put them back in the trunk, which was sealed and sent back to England. When we were all finished, the *douanier* was very pleased with himself. He seemed to think that he had solved matters in a most satisfactory manner. He asked for an autographed copy of my photo. I wasn't going to give it to him at first, but then I changed my mind. After all, he was responsible for one of my most successful personal appearances.



## 30: 100 Men and a Girl

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**I**N recent years I have worked with most of the good directors in Hollywood—such men as Leo McCarey, Frank Capra, William Wellman, Gregory LaCava, Sam Wood, Henry Koster, Jack Conway, Louis Milestone, and others. Today's top directors are very different from the exhibitionists who once roamed Hollywood, wearing riding breeches, berets, and megaphones. They have good taste, good judgment, and real creative ability. It is a pleasure to work with them.

Many of these directors have stopped working for the big studios and have set up their own companies in order to shoot the sort of pictures they like without the supervision that they feel hampers their efforts. One of these is Leo McCarey, who recently won a second Academy award for his direction in *Going My Way*.

Leo is an Irishman with a pixy sense of humor and a great creative talent. He was formerly an attorney in Los Angeles but gave up the practice of law to become a director of two-reel comedies.

I have known Leo almost since the day he started in pictures. We played golf and poker together, but I never worked in one of his pictures until about two years after Verree and I were married, when he called us both to play in a comedy starring Harold Lloyd, called *The Milky Way*.

I soon discovered that Leo often creates new scenes and new situations while he is shooting. He is always ready to take time to experiment and to try out new ideas. Sometimes they don't work, but more often they add new sparkle to the picture.

One morning Leo walked onto the set of *The Milky Way* full

of typical McCary enthusiasm, his eyes alight like a kid who has just had a visit from Santa Claus.

"We're going to shoot the big scene between you and Lloyd," he said. "I've been lying awake nights trying to figure out what to do with that scene, and last night I licked it."

He was referring to the scene in which I was supposed to convince Lloyd, a weak-muscled pacifist, that he had to go into the prize-fight ring and knock out the champion—a character known as "The Killer." All Lloyd could do, supposedly, was dodge blows. He had no other pugilistic talents. He was mad at nobody and the thought of violence or of hurting a nice fellow like the champ was repugnant to him. Naturally, in order to make him go in and fight, he had to be inspired to superhuman effort by me, his manager.

"This is the way we'll play the scene," Leo explained. "You tell Lloyd you have discovered that he has a split personality, which is a terrible thing, and he has got to overcome it, because awful things happen to fellows with split personalities. Lloyd gapes at you; he doesn't know what a split personality is. So you tell him. 'It's like this,' you say. 'You've got a good side and a bad side, just like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.' This scares the pants off Lloyd; he wants to know what he can do about it. So you explain. 'It's the bad side of you that makes you like the champion and want to be nice to him. It's that old baddie in you that won't let you go in there and punch him in the jaw. But don't be discouraged. You also have a good side. The good side of you makes you want to fight for the Milk Fund so that all those babies can have that wonderful grade A certified milk. You've got to think of all those thousands of babies wanting their milk. You've got to go in there and slug the daylight out of the champ. You've got to overcome your baser instincts and go in there hating the champ. For the sake of your better nature you've got to knock the champ for a goal!'"

It was a funny speech and Leo did it for me with all the gestures.

"Great," I said. "Give me the new pages and I'll learn it."

"We haven't written it down," Leo said. "Can't you remember what I said?"

"Not word for word."

"That doesn't matter. Let's start shooting and you can ad-lib it."

"Ad-lib it!" I exclaimed. "An important scene like that! I never heard of such a thing."

"Why not ad-lib it?" insisted Leo. "Maybe it will be better that way. It's that kind of a scene. You're talking a lot of hokus-pokus to the guy and making it up as you go along. Maybe we've discovered a new technique. Maybe that's the way I'll shoot pictures from now on. We'll call it the McCarey System—the ultimate in the true art of motion pictures."

He was kidding about the new technique and the art of motion pictures, because Leo is interested only in making good pictures and not in the art of the cinema. But he wasn't kidding about ad-libbing the scene.

"O.K.," I told him. "I'll try anything once."

So we shot the scene once, and that was it. He printed the first take.

Gregory LaCava is another one of my favorite directors. At one time he was an artist, but because of economic necessity he got into animated cartooning and from that became a director. He has a grin that is second only to Joe E. Brown's, the enthusiasm of a college kid, and no respect whatever for Hollywood traditions. If he had become an actor, he would have been a great low comic. He loves to have a good time, even in the midst of the hard work that goes into shooting a picture.

During the making of *My Man Godfrey*, one of LaCava's best pictures, he and Bill Powell disagreed on how Powell's part should be played.

"You haven't found Godfrey yet!" exclaimed LaCava.

This led to a nightlong discussion of the character of Godfrey,

over a bottle or two of Scotch. As the two parted in the early morning hours, they had finally reached a perfect accord on the character that Powell was playing.

Next morning LaCava arrived at the studio with a terrific headache but determined to get in a good day's work. However, the star of the picture failed to appear. Finally a telegram from Powell was delivered to LaCava. It read: WE MAY HAVE FOUND GODFREY LAST NIGHT BUT WE LOST POWELL. SEE YOU TOMORROW.

I worked in *Stage Door* with LaCava, playing the part of the theatrical producer. The star was Katharine Hepburn.

In my first scene with Katy, LaCava kept saying, "There's too much light on Menjou. Take it off Menjou and put it on Hepburn."

"What are you trying to do?" I asked. "Freeze me to death?"

"Why should I show you up?" quipped LaCava. "Next to all the kids in this picture your face looks like an aerial shot of the Rocky Mountains!"

The banter on a LaCava picture is incessant. If a person doesn't have a quick answer he's dead.

Another director for whom I have the greatest admiration is Henry Koster. He came to Hollywood with Joseph Pasternak, the producer, to direct for Universal. He arrived here in the midst of a typical studio upheaval, which left him out on a limb. He had been a very successful writer-director in Universal's German unit, but when he arrived here, nobody seemed to remember that. He couldn't speak English, so no one thought he could direct an English picture.

He was told, finally, that if he had an idea for a picture and could put together a script that would be suitable for a youthful singing prodigy whom somebody had inadvertently put under contract, he could direct the picture. The young singer's name was Deanna Durbin.

Koster was given a collaborator, Miss Adele Comandini, and by dint of much linguistic labor they came up with a script. To

everyone's surprise it seemed to be pretty good, so the studio gave Koster two more unknown actresses, Nan Gray and Barbara Reed, and borrowed an unknown actor named Ray Milland for the young love interest. Then they told him to go ahead and shoot but not to spend more than \$150,000. That is a lot of money in Sioux City, Iowa, but in Hollywood it is just about enough to make a second-rate horse opera.

Koster started shooting with that budget, and strangely enough the scenes looked pretty good. The studio got excited and decided they'd better spend a little more money, so they gave Koster two of their best contract players, Charlie Winninger and Alice Brady.

The picture rescued Universal from bankruptcy. It was called *Three Smart Girls* and made Deanna Durbin a star. Naturally Koster stayed with Universal to make more pictures.

After the success of his first picture Koster was worried about doing as good a job on his second. He had no ideas and the story department couldn't seem to find anything suitable for Deanna. One day an old fiddle player whom he had known in Vienna came to see him, looking for a job. Koster had no jobs for fiddle players, but he called up a friend who was a musical director and asked him if he had a job for a very good fiddle player who was out of work.

"There are hundreds of musicians in Hollywood who are out of work," replied the friend.

Koster was appalled at his friend's reply. "Something should be done about a situation like that," he told his friend.

"Of course. But what can I do? I have all the musicians I need."

The plight of the old fiddle player worried Koster. He decided that perhaps he could make a few jobs for fiddle players by doing a picture about musicians. That was how *100 Men and a Girl* started.

When the script was finished, Koster decided that he wanted me to play the part of Deanna Durbin's father. Danny Winkler,

my agent, took me to see Koster and Joe Pasternak, producer of the picture. Pasternak began telling me the plot of the picture, with interjections in French and German from Koster. After about five minutes I stopped them.

"That's enough," I said. "I'll be delighted to play the part."

"But Mr. Menjou," Koster protested. "We've only told you the beginning."

"You've told me all I want to know," I assured him. "If I'm Deanna Durbin's father, and I'm broke and out of a job, and she's trying to get work for me, it's the most sympathetic part I've ever had in my life. You can't spoil a part like that for me, and you can't leave me out of the plot. The worst you can do is have me die, and I've always wanted to play one of those five-minute deathbed scenes. Good-by, gentlemen. It's going to be a great picture. Settle the financial details with my agent."

Koster and I had quite a time on the picture. He was trying to improve his English and I was eager for a chance to polish my German, so each of us wanted to speak nothing but the other's language. We compromised and spoke French.

After finishing *100 Men and a Girl* I had just about run the gamut of Hollywood parts. Since then I have been entrusted with almost every type of role. In *A Star Is Born* I played a motion-picture producer, a part that required considerable tact. In *Roxie Hart* I was a flamboyant trial lawyer. In *Bachelor Father* I was a floorwalker. I have played dapper fathers, pathetic fathers, delinquent fathers. Not long ago I was even made a top star again in a picture called *Mr. District Attorney*, of which I am also part owner.

I think I've finally licked the bugaboo of type casting. But as one well-known star said to me, "By the time this town begins to think you know your business, you have to hold yourself together with paste and pins."

In 1943 I played a part that earned me no weekly pay check and no praise for the artistry of my performance, but it was the

most satisfying role I have ever had. It lasted for over six months, and I traveled to "locations" in England, North Africa, and Sicily. The producer of our show was the USO, and our audience consisted of United States troops.

In England we formed a troupe composed of GI's with some professional stage experience and three British girls who had been music-hall performers. In North Africa and Sicily we had a smaller group but continued to put on a two-hour show with music, dancing, and vaudeville skits. At the end of the show I entertained the boys with stories about Hollywood, its stars, and its personalities.

While in Africa I had the privilege of meeting General Charles de Gaulle. Everyone had led me to believe that he would be austere, dour, and morose. Instead he greeted me with a big smile; and when his aide started to introduce us, he brushed the introduction aside. "I have known Menjou all my life," he said in French. "Come in, Adolphe."

I never expected a reception like that. After we were seated in his office, he sent for a bottle of sherry and we sat and discussed the war for an hour or more.

When I got back to Hollywood, after six months of one-night stands in army camps, it was a little difficult to get oriented to the town again. Clean sheets, regular meals, laundries, and lights—it was like a dream. I luxuriated for a week or so and then went out to play a game of golf. I hadn't had a stick in my hands for seven months. Naturally the vultures descended on me. George Murphy and Billy Grady, casting director at Metro, snared me into a game. They knew I would be easy money.

On the first nine they murdered me. I couldn't have hit the side of a barn with a handful of buckshot. So I tried to rationalize the situation.

"After all," I said to them, "in view of what is happening in the world, how can I keep my mind on such a trivial thing as a golf game? It's going to be a long, tough struggle, boys. I've talked with the men who know—men on the inside like First Lord of the

Admiralty A. V. Alexander, Air Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, General Ira Eaker, General George Patton. Do you know what my friend General Charles de Gaulle told me?" I started to tell them about my interview.

"Hit the ball!" Grady interrupted. "You're holding up the game!"

I saw that it was no use; I would have to buckle down or they would trim me. So, as we reached the tenth hole, I determined to recoup my losses by doubling my bets. I teed up my ball and prepared to hit it across a yawning chasm.

I hit a miserable shot; the ball scooted off the tee and into the chasm. A hen could have laid an egg farther than I hit that ball. Gritting my teeth, I stepped up and hit two more duplicates of the first shot. My opponents grinned happily. Finally, with bitterness in my heart, I hit a fourth ball, and that, too, landed in this Valley of Lost Hopes.

At that point Murphy shouted, "Hi, Froggy! What do you hear from De Gaulle?"

Pandemonium! The belly laugh of the month!

I knew then that I was back in Hollywood—that wonderful land of unreality where one is slipped the needle with a laugh.

A short time ago I finished working at Metro in *The Hucksters*, directed by Jack Conway and starring Clark Gable.

One morning I arrived to shoot a scene that had been revised. Conway's assistant handed me the new pages and I began to study my part. Suddenly I came to a line that stopped me cold. I was supposed to say to Gable, "You must come up to dinner tonight. We're having truffles and champagne."

I stared in complete disbelief. It couldn't be! This was where I had come in twenty-four years ago. It had been truffles and champagne that had caused such a furor between the technical experts in *A Woman of Paris*. Fortunately we had no technical food experts on *The Hucksters*, so the dish was never questioned.

While the picture was being shot, I had my fifty-seventh



birthday, an event that I avoided mentioning, especially to the publicity man on the set. Thirty-four of those years have been spent in the movie business. I have worked in 146 pictures and hope to make a hundred more.

Meanwhile, I intend, very soon, to introduce my eleven-year-old son, Peter, to the nine tailors mentioned on the title page of this book, in hopes that he will someday be able to write a much more interesting sequel to this story.





